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Unconventional Joan

1. No subject

Unconventional Joan

Old acquaintances, whom you will recognize when you meet them, herein provide the themes, atmosphere and action of a candidly daring effort to please and help you

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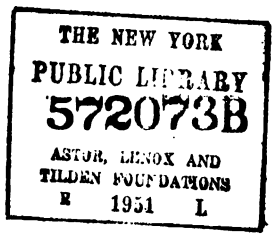
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BUNGALOW BOOK COMPANY

To Her

Unconventional Joan

CHAPTER I

I

AT the corner.

"Extra! *Evening News.* 'War Miseries Multiply!'"

The crier and courier for that influential publication dashed towards two men meeting at the corner of Newspaper Row, at six o'clock on the evening of November 6th, 1918.

"Extra! *Evening Record.* 'War Failures Increase!'"

Raggedy herald number two trumpeted a shrill challenge for the competing newspaper dynasty.

Collision and conflict between the two enterprising contestants were wasted. Both barefooted envoys triumphed. Two papers apiece were thrust into the hands of their unknown chiefs, the editors respectively of the *Morning News* and *Morning Record,* who were on their way to their night's work.

As these two modern Caesars lingered at the corner to exchange jibes about the amusingly imitative headlines of their rival papers—atrociously depressing headlines—their citizen-subjects crowded by to their homes—away from their floundering struggles with the "Press-promoted proceedings of the day."

"Press-promoted and polluted proceedings of the day," Professor Lawrence Trueby, at the college, had cynically put it, in his pungent passion for alliteration.

Disconnected fragments of the conversations of their dependants reached the ears of the two newspaper potentates, always on the alert.

" . . . and that preacher calls this civilization . . . "
" . . . further coal and sugar restrictions . . . "
" . . . tired and want to get out of this . . . "
" . . . couldn't believe a thing his wife said . . . "
" . . . shot him in the stomach . . . "
" . . . divorced her second husband and . . . "
" . . . cheapest silk stockings . . . "
" . . . kissed her at the movies . . . "
" . . . drafted . . . "
" . . . phone keeps tinkling and nobody answers . . ."
" . . . wireless propaganda from the enemy . . . "
" . . . electricity making wars shorter maybe . . . "

Depressing headline chit-chat, most of it, superficially gleaned from quickly snatched newspapers, or, as in the last instance, casually inspired by things as commonplace as the grotesquely vulgar electric signs, which eccentric Professor Trueby elaborately described in his curious sociological thesis, as "vividly radiating their lurid enticements to the impoverished brains of a purblind people, harnessed and blinkered by conventional capitulation to the driving domination of propaganda."

Seen through the Professor's spectacles, whistling boys cut zigzag through the traffic, "brazenly battering" everybody as they went, and their elders gave them room. Vacant-faced girls "prattled pathetically" about their "evening expectations." Faded women artfully con-

cealed unbearable fatigue beneath "perfect pose." Nervous business men, set free after their day's work, "diligently dirtied" the much used air with "cloudy mixtures of carbon monoxide" and tobacco fumes, while they "contentedly crammed" their newspaper wads of enlightenment into their pockets, and strenuously fought their way forward to seats in the cars.

Civilization!

For a fraction of a minute the stampede halted and swerved in its course to make a small space on the pavement for a man to have a fit. Those who had never seen a fit paused briefly to satisfy their morbid curiosity, and then hurried along, taking their sympathy with them for personal use.

Mr. Glitter flashed past in a nobby suit, dead broke, looking for a life-saver. Miss Coy flitted demurely by in pursuit of an extra dash of talcum on the tip of her nose. Alderman Blunt trundled his oppressive importance through the throng with the airs of an owner of the earth. Miss Nondescript, fully aware of the young stripling slinking behind her, kept just far enough ahead of him to lead him on. Johnny Pepp punctuated his alternate steps with expectorations of contempt for the boss who had just discharged him for kissing a stenographer. Widow Cross, of the wrinkled stockings, not relishing being spat at, poked Johnny into the gutter. Another perfect lady poked the poker off the pavement after Johnny. A skidding motor car snorted angrily at being slowed up by such plebeian obstructions, and, a moment later, the rushing torrent of gurgling humanity sucked Johnny and the widow back to the pavement, and then down, as in a whirlpool, through a hole in the ground to a glorified

sewer, where everybody took copious inhalations of the aromatic subterranean atmosphere, and eventually settled upon one another's feet in the trains.

Civilization!

II

For a quarter of a century there had been this daily rush scene at this hour. Newspaper Row, one square long, boasted, among other things, that it was the centre of the city's congestion. But the famous square was also the centre of the city's influence, as had been ordained from the very beginning. That was when, as a dusty roadway, it had been christened "Church Street," after Trinity Church, which presided over the short length of the thoroughfare from its position on intersecting North Street.

Eventually the city government erected a City Hall adjoining the Church, and for that period during which government may be said to have been anchored on religion, Church Street maintained its given name; but when the centre of the city's influence moved out of the Church into the City Hall next door, the politicians opportunely expended a liberal bond issue for a park in the middle of the thoroughfare, and Church Street thereupon assumed its first alias of "Government Place."

Thereafter, merchants who had previously made honest livings on the dusty street vouched for by the name of the Church, boldly broadened their policies and correspondingly enhanced their profits by dispensing a more dignified brand of service commensurate with the exclusiveness of the parkway newly known as "Government Place."

The latest change in the name of the street was an innovation simultaneous with the prodigious prosperity of the city's two newspapers, the *News,* and the *Record.*

The home of the *Morning and Evening News* had rapidly grown to be a palatial building on the east side of Government Place, in the middle of the square. The home of the *Morning and Evening Record* had become an almost equally pretentious establishment on the west side of Government Place, likewise in the middle of the square, and directly facing its competitor, the *News.*

"From the two facing sets of windows," wrote the indignant Professor in his famous thesis, "the gigantic printing presses of these two autocracies, like bristling teeth in the jaws of leviathans, snapped savagely across at each other, morning and evening, and bit off big mouthfuls of paper, desecrated and slimy, which they spat forth into receptacles of a type aptly called, after its contents, 'news truck,' dozens of which tore madly through the streets to numerous dumping places, whence individual helpings of the filthy stuff could be most advantageously dished up to the citizens with their morning saucer of porridge or their evening bowl of soup."

In remarkably short time, the two principalities decided and decreed that the beautiful park in the middle of the street was in the way of their regal dump-carts, and it figured ludicrously in cartoons which lampooned the impracticability of planting flowers on a railroad track. Finally it slipped quietly and completely out of the picture, the centrepiece of which became a double row of rubber-shod locomotives manned by blustering bullies. That was when the centre of the city's influence, primarily located in the Church, and afterwards in the City

Hall, had been moved half-way down the square to the newspaper offices, and the name of "Government Place" automatically became "Newspaper Row."

Bearing upon this periodic shifting of the heart of the metropolis, a certain sudden consequence of the war-strain that nightly drove so many stay-at-homes to the cinema-shows for distraction, was the overnight growth of "Pogo's Picture Palace" at the southern extremity of Newspaper Row, on South Street, facing up the square towards the Church, as if bidding defiance, with its shockingly indecent advertisements, to the Reverend Matthew Holden's dwindling powers of persuasion, and ambitiously competing with the two newspapers for the record in quality as well as quantity of influence exerted upon the local savages.

III

Although none of those who surged past the two editors, not even their own newsboys, knew them, there were many in the moving throng known more intimately than they perhaps realized by the newspaper men, whose prerogative it was both to know and to make known. The citizens' secrets always yielded easily to their enquiries. Only their own competitive secrets and plans tantalizingly taxed the upper reaches of their inquisitiveness, and it was really more because they were shrewd rivals than because they were friends, that the two editors met nightly for a few minutes on their way to their privileged function of preparing for the sleeping city its morning assortment of influences.

Thomas Manly, the younger of the two men, likable in manner as well as in appearance, had spectacularly

graduated into high newspaper circles direct from college, as the son of one of the proprietors and a former editor of the *News,* but his specialized education, intimate relations with his father, and a half-year's gruelling experience, had seemingly equipped him for the editorial duties to which he was enthusiastically devoted with all the fervour of his young manhood. His friends called him a "prodigy." His competitor enviously called him an "effigy."

Wilfrid Keating, the competitor, older than Manly by fifteen years, owner of striking blue eyes that pierced you pleasantly but probingly, once sarcastically confided to his assistant that he, too, "like Manly, of the *News,* had passed from one educational institution to another when he became editor of the *Record,* meaning the "School of Hard Knocks." To him all college products were prodigies of impudent pretence whom he persistently discounted by exaggerating their escapades in his columns, as if they were competitors. Thus he abetted the students' tendency to synonymize "college" with "comedy."

Manly's stylish hat, chamois gloves, smart walking stick, and well-cut suit evidenced his punctilious approval of the conventional proprieties as promoted by his paper. Keating was similarly groomed to an exquisite finish, along somewhat more mature lines. Observers of the two men, as they purchased their papers, might have noted that both of them correctly mirrored the styles which their newspapers were paid to advertise as sanctioned by the arbiters of fashion.

As they stood there, their papers were accommodatingly illuminated by Pogo's powerful electric sign above

his Picture Palace, which suddenly lit up the square, tempting the retreating army of workers to tarry.

"Pogo just lives on that electric juice of his, eh Manly?" ventured Keating, by way of a greeting, and with the characteristic interrogation of the journalist.

"We depend on it, too, don't you think?" responded Manly, similarly questioning and fencing.

"How's that?" enquired the directing brain of the *Record,* wondering how a newspaper could possibly be accused of *depending* upon anything outside itself.

"Well, I suppose electricity is the nearest thing to daylight that you and I enjoy," defensively parried Manly, thinking of the crowds going home, and pitying himself on the way to a night of arduous work.

"That's a fact, Manly. And, come to think of it, the current is more than merely daylight to us. Why, it's actually our breath. We really live on it more than old Pogo does! Do you realize that?"

Keating could not have been the well trained newsgatherer that he was had he not sprinkled his conversation generously with question marks.

"How so?" Manly put the question mechanically, abstractedly following with his eyes an interesting couple emerging from the doorway of the loft adjoining the *Record* building.

"Why, if you take away the telegraph you kill the Press."

"Good evening, Joan, Hello Jerry!" interrupted Manly, bowing to the solemn young man with somewhat unfashionable clothes, and his trim little girl companion, who had crossed over from the loft building and passed the two editors.

"Ah! the two J's," facetiously observed Keating, surveying the couple with his penetrating blue eyes, and assuming that Manly recognized the obvious disparity manifested between the serious smile of the man and the vivacious twinkle in the eyes of the girl.

"Jays chatter, Keating, but those birds hum," icily retorted Manly, in sarcastically selected vernacular, verbally identifying the odd pair with their buzzing electrical experiments in the loft building, and purposely substituting an insinuating synonym for Keating's disparaging epithet. His tone, as well as his eyes that followed the couple, disclosed that either one or both commanded something deeper than his mere respect.

The man, Jerry Englin, who had passed with the girl, was tall by contrast with her. Nearly everyone in the city knew of him, and admiringly called him "Electrical Englin," as he had been alliteratively christened by the eccentric Professor on account of the wonderful electrical work which had been his effort towards winning the war.

The girl, Joan Avery, was just what Tom Manly had aptly described her to be when he and Englin and Joan were at college together—"a dear little figure, and so extraordinarily beautiful that the sweetness reflected in her face actually awes men before it captivates them." To which Jerry had feelingly replied at the time, "That's right, Tom."

Keating accepted Manly's retort like a man who has received a dipperful of cold water in the face, but, with his usual self-control, he replied:

"No offence intended, Manly, but isn't it rather odd and interesting, you know—this affinity business of theirs up there in the attic next door to our building?"

"Nothing of the sort, Keating," quickly answered Manly, reacting spiritedly to the older man's spur-like jab and apparently being forced to yield to the studied inquisition of his competitor. "I am glad to be able to correct your wrong impression. She is merely a very good friend of Englin's, a sort of business associate, 'silent partner' so to speak—'part of his brain,' he calls her—used to work with him on electrical stuff when the three of us were at college together—works with him in the same old way up there in their laboratory next door to your building. Englin never sees her outside of business hours. But he gives her credit for a lot of detail work in connection with his electrical inventions. Says she can jump at conclusions instinctively quicker than he can reason them out. Compares her intuition with wireless transmissions, and all that—"

"Yes, but 'all that,' and particularly sticking to a genius isn't ordinary, you know? Now is it? Normal women, and the pretty ones especially, don't do that sort of thing. They usually pick out someone who feels instead of merely thinks, and someone who feels for *them,* instead of thinking all the time about helping other people. It's unconventional, Manly, and you know it."

Mentally Manly did not deny that Keating was right, but he replied:

"It isn't unconventional in the sense that you suggest, Keating, not in the sense that there is any newspaper story in it. It is novel, but it is not news. I can see your drift. Leave them alone. The girl is all right, and the man is a worker, particularly valuable to the country under present war conditions, and actually engaged, to my certain knowledge, in perfecting an invention which

ought to help you and me, seeing that, as Englin says, it will 'multiply the power of the Press.' "

" 'Multiply the power of the Press!' Indeed? Well, now then, that's something Englin ought to be willing to tell us newspaper men all about," suggested the editor of the *Record,* as he headed for his office.

"He has never explained it to me, an old friend, Keating, so I fancy he isn't going to gush it all out to you."

The rivals separated, individually satisfied with their fencing bout; the older one thinking he had cutely discovered, the younger one believing he had artfully provoked the making of a newspaper story for the *Record.* After the fashion of their highly sophisticated type, the words uttered by their lips had served but to conceal their thoughts and the motives in their hearts. Succeeding events were to disclose both.

"Two weeks!" ejaculated Tom Manly, fifteen days later. "Two weeks! I have heard of 'Three Weeks,' but two weeks—two such weeks—have never been heard of before! And to think that the inciting impulse of it all should have been so casually set in motion by an ordinary conversation between two unimportant men at a common street corner!"

IV

But the foundation of it all extended farther back than Tom Manly's conversation at the corner—back to the pretty English tea-shop adjoining the campus of an American college—back to the interesting college characters who frequented the shop and made it famous—back to the tea-shop's happy scenes—and to Joan, its dainty little queen.

On a day in May, 1918, at the end of the college year which witnessed the graduation of Jerry and Tom, the tidy tea-shop took down its sign, after a touching impromptu farewell tribute of devotion to the fairy custodian who had presided over it for a year after the death of her charming English mother.

"The little mother of the tea-shop," Professor Trueby had christened her, "taking the place of her mother."

War, and the departure of so many of the students for the front, abruptly terminated the tea-shop's unique career, and suspended Joan's programme of financing her way through college at the end of her first year.

"Never mind, Joan," sympathetically remarked aggressive Tom Manly, as he entered the shop on the last day. "It's going to be all right."

The future owner of one of the city's great newspapers briskly crossed the room, admired and greeted by everyone, and took his seat at one of the tables beside his chum, Jerry Englin, whence he kept watching Joan as she flitted around from one group of her friends to another, delightedly reviewing in his mind his plan of "making it all right" for Joan, as well as for himself, as quickly as she would permit during the coming year of his entrance upon the editorial career for which he had been studiously preparing.

It was then that he remarked to Jerry:

"Such a dear little figure, and so extraordinarily beautiful that the sweetness reflected in her face actually awes men before it captivates them."

"That's right, Tom," soberly agreed Jerry.

Quiet, deliberate, meditative Jerry Englin.

Aggressive, enterprising, dominating Tom Manly.

They both sat quietly happy for a moment under the influence of their observation of her.

She was very finely and delicately made, and the simple blue linen frock with its snowy apron and frilled cap seemed to enhance the extraordinary grace of her slim little figure. Her freshness and daintiness were almost mystic, and her clear blue trustful eyes influenced people in a very singular manner because they seemed to offer a sweet and frank confidence.

"Dream-child," murmured Manly.

"Prude," protested Girda Wickley, overhearing Tom and reading his eyes, as she straddled into a chair beside him and Jerry and lit her cigarette. "English prude."

Joan, passing by, heard her.

Jerry looked embarrassed.

Resourceful Tom cleverly replied: "You are amusing, Girda."

It was a cutting commentary upon the limitations of Girda's type, but she failed to discern it.

"I can't make her out," expatiated Girda. "She is so abnormally different from the average girl."

"Average girl," mused Jerry to himself disparagingly. "Once upon a time merely to be a girl was to be admirable.'

"There's another good thing about you, Girda," continued Tom, amplifying his caustic commentary. "I can say what I think about you without putting my foot in it." Which, candidly interpreted, might have meant, "You are the kind with whom a fellow can take liberties."

With elaborate unconcern, Girda cooed her affected appreciation of what she took to be a compliment, and turned her chair around to an adjoining table in time to

hear Joan deprecate a political newspaper cartoon lampooning "The Slow English," which had been playfully presented to her by stylish Conrad Wefers:

"No, I don't care about that." She tactfully brushed the paper aside. "What I like in newspapers are helpful things."

"What's wrong with a harmless newspaper?" challenged Girda.

"Nothing, Girda, absolutely nothing is wrong with a harmless newspaper. It's vicious newspapers, like this one, that are hurtful." She pointed to the copy of the *Record*. "Something or other in me, that I can't help, resents it. It isn't just the kind of influence that I like to have in my shop."

"She's right," championed the bespectacled professor of sociology at the same table, when Joan moved away to bring an extra pot of tea. "College text-books stand a poor enough chance against the bad influence of the best of our newspapers. The newspapers that are brought into this college are studied more carefully than any of the college text-books. They actually cancel the influence of the text-books. The lives of most of the students are smartly modelled upon them, but smartness isn't brilliance, you know."

"Looney Larry!" snickered Girda to a neighbour, giving Lawrence Trueby the popular nickname by which he was known to those of the students to whom he had confided the importance of his coming thesis on "Conventionalism and its Perpetrators." "Don't mind him. He can't help having his growl."

Girda's alluring independence found a patronizing echo in the co-operative taunt of dapper Conrad Wefers,

directed, with typical schoolboy discernment and derision, against the obsession of the learned doctor.

" 'Smartness isn't brilliance,' of course not; but who wants to be brilliant?"

Girda tittered.

Professor Trueby glared.

"Precisely," he retorted, "precisely. 'Who wants to be brilliant?' Those who have the opportunity to become educated"—he squinted at grinning "Conny"—"prefer newspaper instruction, and those who want the opportunity to become educated"—he peered over his spectacles at Joan in the distance—"can't get it. Consequently, lack of education is the most common and embarrassing thing in the world. Poverty prevents it and newspapers neutralize it," he alliteratively declaimed. "Millions are spent by colleges to rationalize human beings, but billions are used by newspapers to make mimicking nincompoops out of them."

In the absent-minded manner of the fanatic, he picked up his folding-chair—"Civilization's dexterous contribution to the delightful art of loafing," he contemptuously called it—folded it up, carried it across the room, unfolded it and sat on it close up to Conny, facing him, and eloquently launched forth into a confidential dissertation, whose wearisomeness Conny, looking over his shoulder, began sardonically to telegraph by frowns and scowls to giggling Girda, who was hugely enjoying his discomfiture.

"It's this way, Mr. Conrad, life is like an ocean," expatiated Professor Trueby, "and it ought to be quiet and calm, and it would be but for winds—empty puffs of gossip and propaganda in newspapers. They stir up the

surface of things—make troublesome waves that have to be buffeted by us, passengers on the sea of life, who can't get where we ought to go if we go with the winds, who get off our course and drive on the rocks if we do go with the winds."

"How can you tell if you're going with the winds?" taunted Conny.

"You look at the day's log," rebukingly retaliated the Professor. "Here's what it reveals about you: You leave port in the morning, Mr. Conny—Conny being short for 'Convention' I suppose—out you go, like a million of the same conventional type—same rigging, same shape hat, same color, same kind of cane, same kind of gloves—you don't use them, but you carry them along anyhow—same kind of eye-harness, same kind of smoke-funnel, same rolling lurch, meeting several hundred of the million others lurching along just like you, same newspaper chart under the arms of all of you, take same old route, same old way, and do the day all alike, as much like yesterday and all the other yesterdays as you possibly can—" He stopped abruptly, scornfully scribbled a pair of quotation marks on the edge of the newspaper, tore off the edge and tossed it at Conny with the crushing denouncement—

"That's your label—it means you're 'copied'—like everyone who uses a newspaper for a chart."

Conny had been risking breaking his neck with artificial nods in mock imitation of going to sleep in the professor's face—to no advantage—and suddenly, in desperation, emitted a stentorian snore so elaborately attempted that it woke him up in the form of a gurgling burst of laughter, which contagiously communicated it-

self to others in the shop. And the lecture was suspended.

Joan returned with the pot of tea.

"Have some tea, Girda?" she proffered, by way of conciliation.

Girda answered by lifting her eyebrows. She had begun to relieve her feelings with pencil and paper, in characteristic school-girl fashion. A few minutes later she turned back to Tom's table and shoved her poetic views of Joan under his nose:

When everybody else but you
begins to do
A thing or two which very few
Would reckon new,
You never will such things condone
By look or tone,
And that is why, forever, Joan,
You'll live alone.

Tom smiled. He knew better!

He also knew Joan's sense of humour sufficiently well to realize that she would enjoy this, and got up to show it to her. And besides, it provided him with an opportunity for suggestive denial. While she was laughing over it with him, a hastily written reply to Girda's effusion began to follow a copy of the first stanza circulating around the room:

When everybody else but me
Has had his tea,
And left the shop exceedingly
Inept to see
That never need a Queen bemoan
Her envied throne,
Adoring, I salute you, Joan—
Live on alone!

"Whose was it?"

Everyone knew who had written the attack, but who had penned the reply? There was an inescapable ring of sincerity in it that aroused serious curiosity. Margaret Holden, delicate daughter of one of the professors, who had valued the refining influence of the tea-shop and was honouring it on its closing day by his presence, left her father's side and hastily took the poem to Joan, still standing with Tom.

She read it, blushed crimson, and hurried behind her counter. Joan had the fair pink-and-white English complexion which flushes so easily to a deeper carmine, and, like all shy girls who blush to find themselves conspicuous, she resented bitterly the becoming little trick that some of her envious sisters would have given much to possess.

Tom read the poem, paled perceptibly, and anxiously scanned all the male faces in the room.

"Who is the author?" asked dandy Conny Wefers.

"Who is he, Joan?" coaxed Margaret.

"Tell us, Joan," pleaded a chorus of voices.

Joan came smiling from behind the counter.

"There isn't anybody —" she began.

"Of course not!" chirruped the chorus.

Tom Manly wondered if her statement included him. He scrutinized her laughing face, bewildered.

"I love all of you," she protested, grateful for their patronage and their friendship, "and I am sure you all love me—because you have proved it so magnificently."

It sounded like the beginning of her valedictory—her valedictory and her apology.

The chorus was hushed. The way she said it made

silence its only answer. Her face had become very sober.

She sat down in the midst of her friends, realizing that it was for the last time, and began to talk to them like a mild little mother—so little that she seemed to have wandered in from the nursery.

So little and so motherly.

The little mother of the tea-shop—no more.

"I don't know how I am going to get along without you," she said and quickly corrected herself. "I didn't mean that, not exactly. I meant that it is going to be hard not to see you any more—but of course, this is no time to be jealous of one's friends, is it?—or to be disagreeing with any of them," she looked penitently at Girda—"much less fretting and feeling badly over losing an old tea-shop. There's such a bigger feeling—" She hesitated.

She had pinned a little British flag alongside of an American flag in the white frill that encircled her beautiful hair, and she took them out now and held them in her hands—hands so tiny and yet so capable.

The two little flags, held together, talked for her and said what she meant.

For a moment she regarded them silently, then added, again looking apologetically towards Girda:

"I put it to you—I could never tear some things that are English out of my heart—now, could I?—English ways are so much a part of me—they meant so much to my mother—and anyhow, you wouldn't expect me to, would you? It isn't done, you know. But I have come to love all of you so dearly that I don't know now which I love more, my old friends at home or my new friends here—and anyhow, we are all one now."

They made no comments nor interruptions.

The spell of listening seemed too pleasing to lose.

But their thoughts were interesting comments upon her mild manner of moving them.

"Dream-girl," thought Tom, again.

"Bewilderingly fine," thought Jerry.

"Gentility," thought Matthew Holden, "the art of gentle words and manners."

"Breeding," thought Professor Trueby.

"Angel," reverently thought Margaret, watching her father's eyes, as they in turn watched the little speaker.

"It is so wonderful for us to be just one—one big people—instead of two!"

Joan was radiant.

"Some newspapers seem to be always trying to make us quarrel—provoking us to fuss, as though we were little boys and girls and could be made to do it—always reminding us about our littlenesses—never trying to be polite—and politeness is something, or ought to be—even in a newspaper, don't you think? But you don't find it in them—'Those English,' they keep saying over here—and over there, 'Those Americans'—contemptuously, tauntingly, temptingly, it's childish behaviour—it deserves a spanking—it's mischievous politics—it's not the kind of influence I like in my shop. That's all I meant, Girda." She looked pleadingly at her attacker. "Politicians and papers play with people maliciously—they provoke people to think things about one another which they would never think about one another if not tempted to do so—people submit too tolerantly to their politicians—"

"Plunderbund politicians," sympathetically and alliteratively interrupted Professor Trueby. "Profiteering patrioteers."

"People need one another more than they need their politicians," continued Joan, "especially our two big English people—we need each other not only now but after the war—always! America can do so much for England—for English people—and England can do so much—yes, English people can do so much for Americans, too. Anglo-American friendship between individuals is natural and common, and enmity between our politicians and papers should not be permitted to break it down. That's the only way to look at it, isn't it?"

The trusting blue eyes asked approval for her aspiration. Other eyes, some of them moist, others blazing, unmistakably gave it.

"Anyhow," she added, by way of justifying her ideal, "that's the way my father used to look at it. My mother told me so."

That settled it. That made it all right. That gave her the courage to say it all over again, with explanations.

"You know, he died before I knew him, but he meant to come over here to get some of your wonderful spirit —'aggressiveness,' Tom calls it, don't you Tom?"

"Pep," said Tom, encouragingly.

"Yes, and give something English in exchange for it. So mother came, with me—and we opened this little shop, and offered some English atmosphere and manners to take the place of some of your conventionalities—and we got in exchange a lot of your splendid methods—and my chance to get a year in college—and the opportunity to know you all—Oh, it has just been too wonderful to last—"

She broke down.

Her little valedictory was over.

Her brief apology: an unwitting eulogy.

One by one, and in pairs and in groups, her friends took sorrowful leave of her.

Tom stood on guard by her side, as they passed out of the shop.

"We'll all be back together again, Joan, and I'll study my text-books instead of the newspapers," comforted jaunty Conny Wefers, as he passed out in his new suit cut after the latest styles advertised by the *Sunday News*.

"I want to talk to you some time about my thesis—" Professor Trueby began, but was interrupted and jostled along by Girda Wickley, who softened up and spluttered:

"Joan, will you come and live with me—will you?"

"Joan is going to live with us," insisted Matthew Holden. "I was just on the point of asking her. I am giving up my professorship to become Rector of Trinity Church and there is so much room in the Rectory—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Tom, "but will you good people mind holding your generous offers in abeyance until I have had a little chat with Joan?"

Aggressive Tom!

"Tom always gets what he wants—like the indomitable American that he is," commented the new Rector of Trinity, in a knowing way, as he diplomatically led Girda and Margaret out, and left the shop to Joan and Tom—and—still sitting at his table—meditative Jerry.

"More tea, Jerry?" playfully enquired Joan.

"Yes, tea for three," he answered, inviting Tom and Joan to join him.

Toying with his telltale pencil, recently used, he mechanically and appropriately scribbled on the menu card, as if it were one of his scientific formulae:

T — 4 — 3

Tom looked at the telltale pencil, then at the poem in Joan's hand, then at Jerry's downcast eyes, then at Joan's —downcast, too.

"Joan—" Tom hurriedly began, and stopped, embarrassed by Jerry's presence.

"Joan—" slowly—very slowly—began Jerry, and then nervously continued: "I'm through school now—you know—just like Tom—and going back to my old laboratory—in the loft—where I worked before going to college. The War Department thinks I can help with some electrical work—I think you can help, too—it might give you a way of doing a bit to 'win the war'—you have been working with me on electrical stuff already, you know—do you think you could keep it up—with me—do you think you could do that, Joan?"

It had taken him minutes to say it. He hung on her reply.

"Why the only help I could give, Jerry, would be to prepare your tea," laughingly replied Joan, conscious, for the first time, of something deep and sweetly resonant within her—as if it might be the very veins of her gentle English blood—that seemed to vibrate in sympathy with Jerry's deliberate tones, and harmonize enchantingly with his quiet temperament.

"That will do, Joan," Jerry hurriedly accepted, as he symbolically wrote beneath the other formula:

T — 4 — 2

"It won't do at all," disconsolately thought Tom to himself; but smilingly he said aloud:

"May I come up to the loft, too—for tea?"

"You certainly may, Tom," warmly replied Jerry,

"and the oftener the better," but he did not erase the "T — 4 — 2." Instead, he drew a circle around it, and on the circle put two dots, together, as if to infer:

"That one is you, Tom; this one is me — contestants at the post."

Like the start of a race!

Joan picked up, to keep, the precious penciled symbol of new-born aspirations so intimately related to her, and unwittingly baptized it with two big tears that happiness squeezed from her eyes.

"Good old Jerry," she tenderly murmured. "Like a father to me. Dear Tom, like a brother to me."

Wistful, studious Jerry.

Dashing, dominant Tom.

CHAPTER II

I

THE tea-shop had closed in May. It was six months later when Tom Manly stood in the evening with Keating at the corner and watched Joan come with Jerry from the loft-building.

Next morning the thousands who had crowded out of Newspaper Row the night before packed back into its confines, as usual, until there were nearly as many people in the buildings as there were cubic yards of space.

As early as seven-thirty Joan stopped at the corner to purchase the two morning papers from a cherry-cheeked newsboy, and then cut diagonally across the street towards the old loft-building beside the *Record* office, followed by a black pup, a collie, a cat and a "sooner," which had picked her out of the crowd a block away.

When the newsboy had asked Joan on a previous morning why she called her fourth companion a "sooner," she had replied that it was "because he would sooner bark than bite."

As the five chums reached the doorway to the loft on this particular morning and met there half a dozen other pals of varying sizes and breeds, the "sooner" verified Joan's appraisal of him by attempting a subdued sort of yelp, until her reproachful eye and a collie's growl sent him scampering up the three flights of stairs, leader of the race to the fourth floor.

These were some of Joan's odd friends. She had more of them than was practical. In the beginning a neglected cat had come alone and taken up with her,

but as he could not keep her kindness to himself, a lot of uncared for animals of all kinds heard about it, and these spread the good word around the neighbouring block, until it got to be usual for animals to pick up an acquaintance with her, in hopes of being invited to the loft for breakfast.

Philosophical Jerry, studying Joan in the laboratory, in his natural way of placing everything analytically under a mental microscope, set down among his first observations of her—in a little diary of deductions that charted the growth and conscientious control of his love for her—the impression that the understanding between her and her animals evidenced an unusual intensity of mother-instinct that should be allowed to have its course, and he accordingly hospitably accepted her unconventional friends whenever he arrived at the loft before they had been comfortably fed and dismissed.

So every morning there were cats and dogs in the outer office of Jerry Englin's laboratory, and birds on its window-sills, and a happy little lady in attendance on all of them, until their empty tummies had been nicely warmed up for the start of the day's work. Then the feathered pets flew away, and the four-legged visitors filed past her as she stood at the doorway saying good-bye to them, christening the new ones and calling the old ones by name, "Paregoric," "Pickles," "Carbureter," "Caruso," "Crêpe de Chine," "Hookworm," "Ice Cream Soda," "Sour Stomach," "Small Change," "Tonsilitis," and so on.

II

Joan's nicknames at college had been almost as numer-

ous as the titles of her pets. Outstanding characters in any community usually earn several baptisms, and Joan surpassed most of her companions in this respect.

Her soft contralto voice mellow as a boy's, and a certain resemblance in her curls and her slight figure, had prompted her earliest class-mates to call her "Little Lord Fauntleroy."

Chivalrous Tom Manly had dubbed her "Sir Galahad."

The college smart set called her "Lady Odd," because she preferred to mope on scientific stuff with solemn Jerry Englin, and probably also because, in the beginning, being a retiring little foreign girl in the midst of strangers, she was naturally on the defensive in respect to her somewhat odd manners, until, in an unprejudiced way, she decided that her customs were not so odd, nor so hurtful, as some native conventionalities which gradually she frankly discouraged, after her defensive demeanour developed into that spirit of aggressiveness which characterized the new atmosphere in which she found herself, and which aggressiveness she was eventually led into using, in a very militant manner, as earnestly in behalf of those who had taught it to her as they themselves had habitually practiced it to their own disadvantage.

This phase of her development as the irresistibly likable but scrupulous supervisor of the influences in her tea-shop had been aptly epitomized in one of the numerous poetic effusions that circulated in the shop, unsigned, and unsuspected by everybody as attributable to Jerry Englin—a literary effort which hymned her diminutiveness, her gaiety, and her faithfulness to instinct, by prettily picturing her as belonging to "a joyful band of

fantastic little creatures dropped down on earth from Heaven to kick up their legs as much as three inches from the ground in the witchingest kind of a way while laughingly shrilling their plaudits of the good deeds of mortals with voices so soft that they seemed to humans to be none other than their own inward whispers."

Tom Manly had enthused over this bit of verse when it reached the table where he was sitting with Joan's unknown champion, Jerry Englin, and called it, "A beautiful pen painting of some lucky lad's destined guardian angel."

"That's right, Tom," Jerry soberly acquiesced.

"Slush," added Girda.

III

Methodical Jerry's serious diary contained the following as his first comprehensive survey and digest of Joan's character, after they left college and had worked together for a while in the loft:

"While others around her grow up old in wisdom of the customs characteristic of our ultra-sophisticated age, Joan, although the most light-hearted of creatures, and the very merriest, retained at school and still retains that kind of simplicity which makes blasé ladies refer to her disparagingly as 'young.'

"She perplexingly declines to grow bigger or older."

Jerry felt pretty well satisfied with that particular line in his diary. It seemed to him to be a fairly good synopsis of the subject of his study; but he amplified it on a succeeding page at considerable length:

"When one candidly admits that this epoch of the Great War is the wickedest, the most abandoned, the rot-

tenest in all history, it seems preternatural that genuine integrity such as Joan's can survive in the midst of such uncontrolled corruption.

"The difference between her and her contemporaries is the difference between day and night. She is modest when vulgarity seems to be the common robe of women. She has the bloom and beauty of youth when average complexions are of the detachable kind. She is plainly unaffected while others strain outlandishly to ape the garb and pose of fashion-models and people pictured in advertisements. She is loyal to her sex when the practice of character assassination has become second nature to women. She lends her faculties to substantial things when other minds exhaust themselves upon frippery frivolities. She is full of pity when selfish cruelty is the rule. She is pure of heart in an age which has forgotten what purity is. She preserves her individuality undiluted in an era of easy and general surrender. She is sound to the core when moral canker affects everyone. She is a conspicuous exception—frankly 'unconventional' in thought, word and deed."

On the day after that on which Jerry had laboriously delivered himself of this conception of the "exceptional woman" and cradled it between the folds of his diary, his mind was still warmly reminiscent of it, and the shadow of it fell full across some similar observations which he set before a group of his old college-chums who visited the campus with him at the commencement of the autumn term.

Girda patiently heard him through, and then sarcastically remarked:

"Jerry, you know such a lot about women!"

IV

"It is quaint, if ever a workshop was," remarked Margaret Holden to one of the few customers in her book shop across the street from Englin's place, pointing up to the fourth floor of the loft building. "It is four floors up but four miles away from this hurlyburly of congestion and materialism down here. And yet it is in touch, more so than the rest of us, with all that is going on down here and everywhere, because Englin's wireless equipment keeps his rooms buzzing with the news of the world. Go up some time and have a look at the place. You'll see a lot, and you'll hear a lot more than you see, I promise you. No, you can't get past Joan in the outer office ordinarily, but we're chums, you know—yes, Joan has lived at home with father and me since she left college, so I'll speak to her and get you a royal reception. You'll love Joan, and you'll want to go back again to look at the motors and sparks and twinkling lights and detectors and tuning coils, and listen to people talking to you over the air from hundreds of miles away, and hear music coming from nooks and corners of the rooms where there are no musical instruments at all, but only wires and magnets and batteries. Jerry Englin is the man, you know—no, you don't know, do you? It's something of a secret—a government secret—don't tell anybody—he's the man who perfected the instruments for talking to aeroplanes while they are still up in the air. Yes, obscure Jerry—right up there in that loft—and he believes that wireless 'phones are destined soon to deliver to us operatic tunes direct from Vienna, and plaintive strains straight from Aloha land, and the Gregorian Chant, if you like it, all the way from the Vatican at

Rome. Yes, I know you can't believe it; but you go up and hear for yourself. And just think of a girl living in an atmosphere like that, as Joan does. It is so extraordinary, so novel—no, I wouldn't call it bizarre—but tremendously fascinating, just like an entirely different world from ours—above it, better than it, freer, absolutely independent of us, detached from everything that we depend upon, such as these unwanted books that I am trying to sell for father, and his preachings at church and the movies, and even the newspapers. Oh, you want to go up right away, do you? Yes, and you'll want to stay, let me tell you; but better not go now. Let me arrange it with Joan to-night, and then I'll ring you up in the morning. Oh, no, I won't forget. Good-bye. Watch out! That fellow almost bumped you over, didn't he? Wonder if he will work as quickly when he gets there as he does while he is on his way? Good-bye."

V

Up in the loft, beneath a beam of sunshine that flooded the rooms with brightness, the wireless was bringing in the sad deep voice of an operator in a distant broadcasting station, singing the most sorrowful of all songs:

> "The heart bowed down by weight of woe
> To weakest hope will cling—"

The throbbing tones were overpowering in their appeal for sympathy.

"Poor man," thought Joan, as she opened the door into the inner room after dismissing her pets. "I wonder if he really feels like that, or whether it is just a test-tune that fits in with his experiments? He sings it so often

every day, and sings it so pathetically, that I almost suspect it is a part of him." She paused to listen to the closing strains, her heart filled with the eternal tenderness of women towards a strong man, broken by despair:

"For Memory is the only friend
That Grief can call its own."

The lament of a lost soul! Joan stood motionless. Her head was bent a little towards the ground; she was lost in thought, not conscious of herself nor of the world. The glorious colour had faded from her cheeks, leaving her deathly white. In her eyes was the look of a dumb creature that has had a mortal hurt. Uncomplaining, unquestioning in its pain, so was she suffering doubly in her helplessness to help. . . . Thus Jerry Englin found her, standing there with her heart showing in her eyes, her face infinitely sad and sweet. Instantly when she saw him, the droop vanished from her form, but the sad melody still reached her ears:

"The mind will, in its worst despair,
Still ponder o'er the past,
On moments of delight that were
Too beautiful to last;
To late departed scenes extend
Its visions with them flown,
For Memory is the only friend
That Grief can call its own."

Jerry Englin had crossed the room and stood beside Joan, listening with her, and peering down through the depths of her soul.

As the wonderful little glass valves of his wireless detectors on the table before him, mysteriously reaching out through miles of space to the mournful singer, accur-

ately recorded the singer's words, so Jerry's mind and heart reflected Joan's thoughts and feelings at the moment, as perfectly as if an electric circuit were conveying her emotions to him. His whole being was attuned to hers. Their faculties vibrated sensitively in exquisite harmony; speechless and yet speaking as clearly as if words conveyed their thoughts; intimately joined, and yet apart.

Jerry felt that he was being drawn to her; must touch her, must take her in his arms. She was very close to him, closer perhaps than she had ever been before. With all his heart he wanted to comfort her; to stroke her hair, if he might do nothing more. He knew how she was feeling, and how heart-hurt she was. She was calling upon him to take her, to soothe her. He could hear her call as clearly as he heard the words over the wireless coils—perhaps even more clearly. Every beat of his heart was bringing it to him; and he answered—as well as he could—caressing her, if only with his worshipful eyes that spoke his sympathy with her. Nor did Joan fail to grasp how utterly he was feeling with her, and her face coloured with gratitude for his response to her mood. Blushing, she dropped her head and tried to hide her face, and the analyst in Jerry straightway wondered why girls always did so when they found themselves blushing, and why the oftener it happened the more they failed to get reconciled to it. Deducing that Joan could not bear to have him see her blush, and observing that she had moved away toward their little table in the outer room, Jerry made things worse by calling attention to her blushes, and so found out that it was the unkindest thing a man could do in the circumstances. But still

his scientific nature urged him to test the phenomenon, and to see his test work out just as he had calculated, for now her face was flaming with colour. Sorry for what he had done, but still greatly interested analytically, according to his mental habits, he tried for a reaction by saying the blush was very becoming to her and she must not mind it. Instantly it spread with still deeper intensity from the roots of her hair down over her throat, and the tears overflowed a little and ran down her hot cheeks.

Any other man than poor analytical Jerry Englin would have realized that she was calling—calling now as never before to him, to take her in his arms, and on her lips to crush to fragments the barriers of conventionality that they were maintaining between them. But blundering Jerry, absorbed with theories when the moment called for action, and in great distress over what he had done, hurriedly concluded that the best thing now would be to take himself off for a while; so according to his habit when he wanted to get away from things, he turned on one of his buzzing motors and became absorbed in its whirring.

He loved his motors without restraint. He could take liberties with them. They were the sole recipients of his affectionate ministrations, and by way of return, they completely enveloped him. Their soothing hum deliciously detached him from everything but his own thoughts, and irresistibly moulded in him a mind becoming daily more and more prone to develop speculative moods.

But he turned the motors off after a moment, because starting his work ahead of other set formalities was a violation of the methodical routine regularly adhered to

up in the loft. First of all he must carefully file away the two newspapers of the previous night, because they were intimately connected with his work. So were all newspapers. The "Press" was his preoccupation, literally his obsession. He alone knew the exact extent of his planned enhancement of war-propaganda facilities. He alone dreamed of the possibilities attainable if his numerous daily tests eventually enabled him to perfect his partly completed invention. Perhaps it was the nearness of his workshop to the two great newspapers, perhaps it was something else, which had set him trying to find a means of "multiplying the power of the Press."

He liked that phrase—"multiplying the power of the Press."

He was accustomed to repeat it to himself for the sake of stimulus in his work.

As a further incentive at the start of the day, his second act was invariably a short pause at the front window, where he could peer across over the fire-escape at the office of the *News,* while actually standing alongside of the editorial rooms of the *Record,* and only separated from them by a wall. It was distinctly a newspaper atmosphere in which he worked, with these big news bureaus hemming him in and the news of the world pouring into his laboratory over the wireless. So he dreamed that the power of propaganda, proving already so valuable in warfare, and already so extensively adopted by the Press, could be multiplied and intensified by his invention—no small task for one puny human to set himself in the winning of the war.

"What else better could I do?" he used to ask himself. "What more could I do if I went to the Front?"

Reason, as he interpreted it, would tell him, "Nothing more; not so much."

Between repeated acceptances of this verdict and as frequent recurrences of his scruples, he goaded himself into working harder and faster, and kept reminding himself that nothing must be permitted to interfere with the duty delegated to him, not even his struggle with his attitude towards Joan.

VI

"Tea is ready," he heard Joan call to him in her soft voice, and there she was—the little mother of the tea-shop—sitting at the tiny table, waiting for him, with tea and rolls, and the two morning papers, as usual.

That was the regular morning programme; first, filing yesterday's papers; second, looking out of the window; third, tea and rolls; fourth, digesting the morning papers; and then to work for the full day.

He turned and walked towards the table, thinking, as he always did at this point in the morning, how admirably she had always handled his affairs, and himself too, how unselfishly she looked after him, how he depended upon her, and how unjust to her it all was. Tenderness invariably almost mastered him then—it would have done so had he allowed it. But he thought too much of her, and honestly appraised his own peculiarities too well, to want her to have to put up with him all his life, to throw herself away on one who grew hourly more and more secluded, absorbed in his experiments, solitary, wooden, actually callous from concentration upon analytical work that over-developed his brain and dulled his heart. Scientifically scrupulous by training, he could not but admit

to himself that this was obviously a tremendously hazardous adventure upon which they had embarked, not hazardous indeed for himself—selfish rather for himself, nearly eight years older than Joan and yet so willingly dependent upon her—but hazardous for her, so worthy of the finest man in the city. And then would come the stabbing recollection of Tom Manly, so much nearer Joan's age and so certainly destined for success.

He glanced at her while she was not looking. How calm her face was! How fresh! Not a trace of the effects of mental anguish, such as he might bring her—undoubtedly would bring her. No. He knew for certain, reasoning scientifically, that he could never be one with her—the thought of it he had philosophically termed an absurdity. She, a creature of instincts, tenderly emotional, he, coldly calculating, an eternal reasoner; how could two such natures share one life? It was impossible, unthinkable; it was wrong even to invite it; and he must tell her so, as plainly as he could, just as he had often tried to do before.

"Tom Manly looked splendid last evening," he said. "There's one man who certainly has worn well since we were at school together, Joan."

"Jerry, I was just going to say that very same thing to you," she replied.

"There it is again, Joan; that intuition of yours, marvellous attribute of women! How often you have taken the words out of my mouth in that way, the very thought out of my mind! But I wonder if you can see in my heart the feeling that is there this very minute, the solicitude about you. Can you?"

Joan coloured, and her heart beat faster, expectantly

and hopefully belying the dependability of her instinct for the moment, for then that instinct was reading his heart—not as he would have read it.

"Can't you discern what I am feeling about you?" he repeated. It was not an easy subject of conversation for him, and he wanted her help.

She noticed that he did not say "how" but "what" he was feeling about her. She wanted to hear him speak for himself. Once only in her lifetime come such words to a woman's ears from her loved one, and she wanted to hear them. Could she help him to say the words?

"Maybe I do know what's in your heart, Jerry, but you tell me."

"Well, Joan, I have been feeling it so acutely that it pains me, and I have been feeling it for a long time, and in my poor way I have often been trying to make you see, that—"

He hesitated. It hurt him to hurt her. He believed he knew exactly how deeply and unselfishly she cared for him. And perhaps he was wrong anyhow in opposing her inclinations. He realized that he could never be happy away from her. He was confident that he could never be happy with anyone else. In fact, he did not think that he could even carry on his work without her.

That was a serious thought!

No! It was a selfish thought. He dismissed it.

But then, on the other hand, so was it selfish and inconsiderate towards Joan to deny himself to her if that was what she wanted. But was it? Was he not presuming? Would it not even be presumptuous to have said what he was going to say? If he said it he could not take it back. No, he would say nothing—that is,

nothing definitely planned in advance He would simply start to speak and let his words follow the impulse of the moment. Possibly he would say what she expected him to say, whatever that was.

"Yes, Jerry," she quietly broke in on his soliloquy, trying to help him.

Always serious, he had never before looked so solemn as he did now.

"Joan"—he lingered a moment on her name, not trusting himself at first to look at her. Then he went on, haltingly:

"Joan, I have lately been feeling clearly what I have always thought, and the feeling of it hurts me unbearably—that it is all wrong, it is not right, my depending on you. It is not right to you, I mean—it is unfair. You see it's this way." He placed his knife in front of her, and reaching over for her spoon laid it alongside of the knife. "I am the knife, Joan, and this pretty little spoon—that's you. I am painfully straight, and sharp and narrow, you see, but you, by your nature, bend in naturally on this side, and all around, and broaden out down here, and you are made to help—that's your purpose, to help, but I, this dangerous old stick of a knife can do nothing but cut, cut, cut, and I could even cut you, see?" and he made the knife slip and jab the spoon. "That was an accident that time, but it could easily become a habit. It frequently does. It usually does. Men doing work like mine get intensely self-centred, abstracted, aloof, crabbed, odd, inconsiderate by nature, and take lots of things for granted—really not appreciating them—hardly even noticing them—just as I have so wrongly, but not exactly intentionally, been taking you

for granted, Joan; and I know myself so well, and I know so well what you deserve, and what I want to see you have, that I am going to try to get along without you. I don't know how I am going to do it, but I really mean it. I am going to try to get along without you; and I want you to know that that is just exactly how I feel about it."

Her pleading eyes, deeply glowing with her pathetically hurt feelings, spoke her mute reproach as touchingly as the few words with which she answered him:

"Are you quite sure, Jerry, that that is just exactly how you feel about it?"

He did not immediately answer her question. Was it a challenge? Was her instinct telling her that he was hiding the real feelings in his heart? Or was she wanting him to say it again and conclusively assure her that he wanted her to feel released and free? He must think.

Inquisitorial, analytical Jerry—he must think—not feel.

And Joan, unreasoning Joan—she must feel—not think; understandingly feel for Jerry fretting over the unsolved problems of his invention; understandingly sympathize with his dissatisfaction over doing hidden war-work in the loft; discerningly pity his solicitude about his standing in the eyes of those who had gone to the Front; knowingly want to ease his worry over the rectitude of his attitude towards her. "There's such a simple solution of it all—oh, Jerry," her heart called to him "can't you see?"

Jerry inadvertently reached for the morning *News*. That was always the next step in the day's routine.

After the *News* came the *Record*. For a moment he was looking at the paper without seeing anything printed on it, distractedly thinking. Then he deliberately let himself read, promising himself that he would answer her question in a few minutes, after he had decided just what it meant.

In Tom Manly's paper he came across an article about which he remarked to Joan, "Tom must have inserted this for my especial encouragement," because it dealt so directly with his experimental activities. He read it to her while she watched him intently, admiring his glowing interest in things connected with his work and mentally reversing his own self-condemnation by observing to herself that he was so far above the average of men, and so necessary to the advancement of their comforts, that not only Tom Manly and his paper, but all the others, owed him encouragement and co-operation and loving care.

"RADIO-PHONES

"Nothing promises to be of greater value than the development of the Radio-Phone, already engaged in the transmission of musical concerts, speeches, weather reports, commercial messages and news. The number of instruments being installed is increasing, but as each set has been independent there has been considerable crossing of currents and jamming of wave lengths. Regulations will have to be made to clear the air for the broadcasting of the proper amount of news and entertainment, by curbing amateurs and *controlling* individual receiving sets. This will be accomplished not only by restricted broadcasting but also by the

> restricted installation in homes of standardized receiving equipment capable only of receiving messages from *properly regulated* stations."

"Do you see, Joan, what that means? That's what we call an 'inspired' article. That's propaganda. That paragraph actually indicates and tries to offset the solicitude of the Press over the encroachment of wireless upon their business. The newspapers don't want news, which they sell, broadcasted gratuitously or differently from the way in which they want to put it out. Notice the wording of the article, '*proper* amount of news' and '*properly* regulated' receiving sets. That means farewell to the 'Freedom' of the air. 'Freedom' of the air is going to be like 'Freedom' of the Press. 'Freedom' is going to mean 'Privilege.' You see the Press is going to try to keep control of the air by controlling the kind of receiving instruments installed in homes. So you can't get any kind of news, to begin with, *proper* or improper, unless you have one of their standardized instruments; and even when you do have one of their instruments, you can't get anything but what they consider *proper,* because the instruments won't be able mechanically to receive anything else, see? And they'll do it. They'll pass their own legislation to do it. And nobody will stop them, for if anybody stopped them, or tried to stop them, or was even suspected of trying to stop them, he'd be stopped himself and put out of the way—maybe."

Then his eyes fell upon a second article which made him think more intently than ever of Joan and remember her question which he had not yet answered:

"EMOTION AND WIRELESS

"Every human being is both a sending and a receiving radio-telephonic instrument, and this quality explains many instances of instinctive knowledge and telepathy. Physiologists agree that nervous energy is electrical, and as all other electrical impulses set up wireless waves it is reasonable to suppose that nervous energy must do the same when exerted in pain, affection, passion and all brain activities. There is no physical improbability that the nerves of the brain contain some arrangement of tissues competent to act as a wireless detector or receiver for nerve-impulses sent out from elsewhere. Thus we have minds in tune, telepathy, intuition, the magical influence one upon another, manifested in the activities of great leaders of armies, orators, teachers, and the marvellous instinct of women."

"Joan, how do you feel about that?"

He frequently asked her not what she "thought," but how she "felt" about the many subjects which they were accustomed analytically to examine together. He was thinking of what he confessed to Tom Manly about her being almost a "part of his brain."

"It is a naïve explanation," she replied. "A woman can't satisfactorily explain her instinct to a man. A woman's intuitive knowledge of some things is knowledge that differs profoundly from all other in its source. It hardly comes from her sensations, and certainly not from her reason—"

"Aren't you presupposing its origin must be from within?" he speculatively interrupted. "Couldn't it be from outside, as the article intimates?"

"Yes, Jerry, from without and from above. A woman reveres her intuitions. They seem to proceed from an unknown mysterious source, distinct from her ordinary self, and frequently they assume a mystical brilliance inspiring in her a feeling akin to awe. They suggest in explanation of themselves, that by the side of ourselves there is present another being; some voice addresses us and speaks to us. This voice seems to proceed from a nature higher than our own, instinct, conscience, soul, call it what you will, possessing a higher authority and transcending our individual will, and suddenly impulses appear in our consciousness."

Englin, accustomed though he was to dissecting many things with her, listened in amazement to her revelation of the innermost processes of her soul, and amplified her observations in his own mind. He said slowly:

"You are right, Joan. There is no impassable gulf between God and the human soul. There are moments of perfect union between the human and the Divine, moments when a human being feels and experiences God no less immediately than his own self."

But to himself he thought, and determined to write in his diary: "It is plain that a good woman following her instinct can't be wrong, can't be influenced by degrading conventions, must of necessity be above what is commonplace, practically inspired—almost Divine. And that is why men worship good women, not merely covet them, in the way that they covet the conventional among them who never can know what it means to be loved, poor creatures, being merely coveted. And so for a man to have a good and devoted woman near him is to possess a guardian angel, and to dismiss one is like spurning

Divine inspiration and rejecting priceless protection."

He now felt even less able to answer that question of hers. He philosophically asked her one instead:

"Joan, don't a woman's sensations sometimes fight against her instincts? Aren't women liable to confuse what they fancy to be instinct with what is merely sensation; I mean sense-impulse, to use plainer language, heart-impulses, such as all of us by nature necessarily experience?"

He was gropingly trying to find out, if he could, whether or not their odd relations had the sanction of her instinct. He was thinking that he could trust her instinct to approve or disapprove of them. He did not think he dared go against it.

"Yes, my struggle is frequently between my heart desires and my instinct. That's when the heart-desires are wrong. With a man—with you—as for instance at this minute, the struggle is sometimes between heart-impulse and your reason. Either your reason is right in this instance or my instinct is right. You have very candidly told me what you think your reason dictates, and you want to know what my instinct is saying to me. I won't tell you that, but I will tell you this, Jerry, that a woman's instinct has frequently held out successfully against a seemingly logically proven absurdity and shown it to be sophistry."

She pushed Mr. Knife and Miss Spoon together with a quick little shove, as if she were saying, "Of course they're different, but they go together," and, having delivered to Jerry this merciless knockout, gathered up the knives and spoons and cups and saucers and left him sitting there.

Mentally staggered, for a moment he did nothing, and stared with eyes that saw nothing. Then he reached mechanically for the other paper, the *Record,* simply because that was the next routine thing to do.

She had not quite crossed the room before she heard him exclaim:

"Joan!" It was a voice of agony. "Joan!" Her heart was breaking within her. "Joan, my God, Joan—"

Pleading avowal of his dependence upon her!

Piteous to hear!

Painful transfusion of happiness into her soul—ecstatic happiness into her tortured soul!

She stopped, without turning, transported, waiting for him.

He had arisen. She heard him coming to her. He seemed to stagger. She turned. His face was livid. In his trembling hand was Keating's paper, and beneath his pointing finger the headline:

"Electrical Englin Denies Departing for the Front."

Malevolent sequel to Keating's corner conversation with Tom Manly.

Accusing, sarcastic, venomous—the withering headline scoffed at Jerry, snarled at him, bit him, hurt him, almost killed him.

"Slacker, coward, yellow-streak," it hissed at him before the world, with its concocted story about "being at work on a war-invention which he considered more important than fighting at the Front."

Unanswerable, it damned him and yet let him live!

Incoherently muttering "What more could I do?" he sank into a chair staring fixedly at nothing.

Joan, stooping over him, took his cold and trembling hands in her own and sobbed "Jerry, Jerry!" The rush of tears would not let her say more, but presently she fought them back and asked him why he had given the interview to the *Record.*

"Interview?" he gasped. "Interview? There was no interview—merely a 'phone call—Keating just 'phoned—claimed he had heard that I was going to the Front—and was it true? and I said 'no'—and on that, alone, like newspaper men do, he fashioned his story—Keating—infamous, lying blackguard!"

His passion and his resentment were getting the better of him. His face worked with emotion. He jumped up and went striding over to the wall that separated him from the *Record* office as if to plunge straight through it at his attacker, and stood there facing it, gritting his teeth and muttering:

"I'll take him by the throat—I'll—no I won't—I'll let him live and make him suffer—I'll take away his power to do to others what he has done to me—I'll—" then he staggered back exhausted into his chair.

And as he brokenly crouched there, his head buried in his hands, Joan, kneeling beside him, and gazing at him imploringly, tenderly whispered:

"Oh, Jerry, you do need me now."

And prophetically, from afar, as if echoing her words, the mournful voice of the wireless singer began again its throbbing song of grief:

"The heart bowed down with weight of woe—"

CHAPTER III

I

ON the morning following Keating's cunningly designed assault upon him, disgraced Jerry shunned everyone, including Joan. Like the lepers who cry out, "Unclean, unclean," his slinking attitude, as he crept to the loft, unusually early, warned the few who saw him, "Keep away from me." His rounded shoulders suggested grief. His glaring eyes and twitching lips intimated delirium, as he kept mumbling to himself that the only answer to Keating's insinuation would be his quick completion of an invention that must be unquestionably more valuable to the nation than his services at the Front.

"To stop my work, in answer to this challenge, and fight, would be to confess that I do not expect to succeed with my work," he argued. "Unless I do succeed I am a proved and branded shirker. As such I am fit to associate with nobody, least of all with Joan—my only escape lies in greater application to my work, greater intensity, more concentration, complete isolation, especially from Joan."

He had arrived at the loft ahead of her, for the first time that he could remember. He prepared his own tea and had it with his roll, all alone. Then the two morning papers, brought in by himself, instead of being carefully digested as usual, were slipped under his arm to be taken into the inner room, where he alone could see the anticipated continuation of Keating's attack upon him.

But before he buried himself in the inner workroom, away from her, he took his customary stand beside the

window, this time watching and waiting for Joan to turn the corner. As soon as he saw her come into view, followed by her faithful army, he hurriedly poured some boiling water into her teapot lingered a torturous moment while arranging her knife and spoon on the table, and then went into his workshop and closed the door, intending that when she and the little army, with its reinforcements, reached the top of the stairs, she should find her tea ready to pour out.

Joan discreetly took no exception to Jerry's absence from their customary morning meal. Instead of summoning him from the inner room where he had buried himself, she understood, and let it be that way.

"It is a natural thing for him to do," she thought, "but won't it only intensify his strain by emphasizing his sense of shame?"

A moment later, as she passed their little table on her way to ration the army, she discovered a message which he had contritely left for her when he lingered over the knife and spoon. The knife and spoon were lying alongside of each other, very close together.

That discovery was responsible for such an overwhelming and weakening pitter-patter of her heart that she had to sit down a moment, while her regulars, who had hitherto been her first care always, waited, sitting in a row around the table, some of them begging with their front paws, and some of them protesting a little with subdued whines.

Jerry heard her chiding them, in her softly modulated voice:

"Paregoric, are you sick? Hookworm, who's your noisy friend? Be quiet, Caruso!"

And as he waited, close to the shut door, to listen to her voice, he felt sure that some of her conversation with her forces was meant to be heard by him. He suspected that it was her tactful way of encouraging him. He heard her say to her brigade:

"You fellows are a lot of loafers—I should like you better if you did something."

That meant he must not give up until he had succeeded, he felt sure. Later on he heard her dismiss her troops with a sharp little command:

"Leave your fleas outside next time."

This he suspected referred to worries.

Thus Joan brought the sunshine of her bright little spirit into the loft on the morning of this never to be forgotten Friday, that marked, among other momentous events, the rapid approach of Jerry's hour of crisis.

II

He could never have borne to go through the morning newspapers with her. He could hardly stand it alone. Their increasing personal attacks excited him; their war-propaganda mockingly humiliated him.

The assaults in the *Record* were ruthless and cunning. They took the form of supposed letters to the editor concerning what "Electrical Englin" might have scientifically suggested in this, that and the other contingency at the Front. One especially insinuating letter referred to Englin's possible improvement of gas-masks after having worn them. An inside page published his photograph over an article that emphasized the "rare" wisdom he had manifested in choosing between fighting and inventing. It was diabolically sarcastic. Jerry soliloquized:

"Now I am loathed."

Keating had conspicuously spared no pains to present him in a ridiculous and unfavourable light. The onslaught was obviously deeply purposeful. It was plainly not made with the mere object of selling newspapers. It was much more far-reaching than that. Joan feared so, too, when she read her own copy of the *Record.*

She knew Keating flattered himself that he was shrewd and far-seeing. Noting that Tom Manly's paper took no part in the attack, she telephoned Tom and asked him to publish in his paper a refutation of the *Record* articles.

"There is nothing to refute," Tom replied, "and if our paper contradicted or attacked the *Record* we would simply advertise and intensify the insinuations."

"The hopelessness of opposition to the Press," Joan realized.

In addition to the humiliation of the *Record's* attack upon him, the war-propaganda in both papers mortified Jerry. The dispatches from the firing line read like messages directed personally to himself. His own privileged wireless detectors, gathering news from everywhere, shamed him every few minutes with their stories of sacrifice and bravery. Before him, as he listened, men and boys struggled and died in thousands—fathers, husbands, his friends, the sons of his friends—those who were his friends, but what could they think of him now? He watched them suffer, suffered with them, and kept constantly telling himself that he "must do more," and at the same time, enquiring, "What more can I do?"

"I could work harder," he answered himself. "I could double my tests. I could lengthen my hours."

So he intensely determined to do all of these things,

and, as quickly as if he had been doing forced marches, the physical part of him instantly began to break down under his nervous and exaggerated effort to finish in this one day what he might not normally accomplish in many.

With the foundation thus shaking beneath him, his mental stability weakened just as quickly. Within an hour after beginning to work he found it difficult to concentrate upon his experiments. Distractions crept into his efforts. Poison-thoughts began to pollute his mind.

"I wonder why Tom Manly doesn't go to the Front?" he asked himself in one particularly bitter moment.

And his hate of Keating became vicious. "Skunk! Fetid himself—so he believes everybody else foul; always spitting his putrid venom at those he hates."

With body and mind fatally harassed and weakened, his moral fibre showed similar signs of sudden collapse. He sensed it. That strong will of his was tottering—no longer could it hold him firmly in the way of rectitude and exceptional achievement. He knew he was not succeeding. He was hardly even working. And there grew in him an unconquerable longing to have someone to lean upon.

"Honest towards Joan in my strength, am I going to be unfair to her in my weakness?" he asked himself, and answered with an emphatic "No! I may be going to fail, but I am not going to thrust a failure on her. By Heaven, no, I am not going to do that!"

He fumbled nervously with his tuning-coils as he despairingly realized how miraculous would be the assistance necessary to support him in his task, and weakly wondered if Joan had noticed the knife and spoon. Under the glow of his thoughts of her, beckoning to

him, guiding him, helping him, feebly he stretched forth his hands to her as a sinking man in the darkness battling against the battering waves reaches out piteously towards the fading light of the receding ship.

"O God, help me in my struggles," he prayed. "Help me in my struggle against the Press, that I may make it better before it gets the best of me. Help me in my struggle with the worst part of myself, that I may be true to myself without being unacceptable to my fellowmen. Help me in my struggle to complete my invention, that through it I may aid my country, and be worthy of Joan. Help me in my struggle to be honourable toward Joan, that I may not take her if I cannot be worthy of her. O God, help me."

In the evening, after he had been closeted for more than ten unsuccessful hours, he raised his throbbing head, expecting Joan to open the door at any moment to bid him "Good night." She must not find him with his head bowed in despair upon his arm. He would hide everything from her, he had determined—the pain in his head, the pain in his heart.

"They'll print a story of how I have been misusing her here in the loft, next," he said to himself, "and it will be the truth. Maybe they'll come and shoot me then. And I'll deserve it."

She must find him at work, in harness. He fastened the headgear of his most sensitive long distance wireless detectors around his head. He had not "listened in" on the air with them that day. With them he could often hear the big German wireless tower at Nauen sending out German propaganda to intimidate the world. It was talking now, in the same deceptive and tricky way.

"Dreadful news momentarily expected from General Headquarters," it said.

"Why didn't it use the word 'lies' instead of 'news'?" he wondered. "Wasn't everybody aware that it never gave news, but only lies? And didn't it realize that people knew that? Yes, maybe it did, but it certainly also understood that a lie can get believed. And that was the prodigious function of propaganda, to get those lies believed. Repeating the lie again and again was one method. Elaborating it was another. The Germans had innumerable ways. With them insinuation was now a fine art." He noted that they were using one of their methods at that very instant.

"Please keep out, please wait, news expected instantly," the German wireless tower kept repeating, seemingly to prevent other wireless towers from breaking in and jamming the wireless waves, but actually to evoke suspense. Yes, it had played its tricks so often that you would think that everybody would break in on it and tell it to go to the devil, he mentally commented. But nobody did. On the contrary, the whole world listened, as it always eagerly listens to lies and scandals, and Jerry knew that thousands of printing presses stood ready, and that the moment the suspense was broken those iron voices would magnify the lie and shout it forth to hundreds of millions of willing ears, and get it believed by nearly as many brains.

That, he calculated, was the frightful power of propaganda, the tremendous force which he was actually struggling by his invention to "multiply"—yes, multiply; but also purify.

Every time he heard that crafty German operator compel the world to believe him by his simple pressure of

an electric key, he wanted to close a little electric switch on his table and unrestrainedly outstrip the German in his lightning-like dash not to a few, but to all the brains of the world, with truth instead of lies. Some day he would do it, he had firmly believed, and he still despairingly believed, if his tests would only provide the one needed link, if his experiments would only reveal the needed material he had been seeking, if his strength of body could hold out, and his mind keep clear, and if his will-power would bind him steadfastly to his task.

Thus critically he summed up his situation, as he had nervously done from hour to hour all day, and, in an overwhelming attack of self-dissatisfaction, tore the wireless equipment from his head and threw it on the table, where it lay, mocking him and challenging him to conquer it or surpass it, if he could.

III

Joan found him idly staring, instead of working as he had wanted her to find him. That unnerved him still more, and he almost repulsed her as she sat down beside him at his work-table. She was thinking of the spoon beside the knife. He was thinking of his day's failure to blot out his stigma and become worthy of her. The way in which, as if disturbed, but really fearing to trust himself, he drew back from her urged her to explain:

"I just wanted to sit here with you a moment, before going, Jerry."

He did not like to let her see his tense and bloodless face. He kept it turned away. He would not have her pity him. Joan placed before him a memorandum of his experiments for the preceding day, with suggestions

for further analyses. Her daily hope and prayer was that some day her memorandum would bring him the suggestion that would lead to his quick solution of their tremendously important problem.

She always called it *their* problem.

Any day might bring success. Every day she said to herself, as she placed it before him: "Maybe to-day is the day." She said it on this occasion, as usual, and eagerly waited for him to turn and examine it. But he hid his face with his hand as he turned toward her. She saw it, however, and discerned that he was hiding it. A little gasp of mingled horror and sympathy escaped her. He purposely took no notice of her tender commiseration. He would not have her pity.

"I'll brave it out until she goes. I'll not let her see—I'll—"

Joan, watching his face behind his hand, and suspecting the immense effort that he was making to appear interested in her memorandum, saw him stiffen, begin to tremble, drop his hand to her memorandum, start to smile, then laugh spasmodically, almost hysterically, control himself with a mighty effort, and finally turn to her the pathetically grateful eyes of a condemned man unexpectedly saved in the very agonies of death. Hoarsely he muttered:

"Joan, you've done it! I'm sure you've done it! I was never surer of anything in my life! It's what I couldn't think of—I tried and tried, but I guess I just couldn't. And now I can see how to do it as clearly as if I were doing it this minute."

In his relief his pent-up and almost abandoned hopes expressed themselves in a spirit of exultation such as he

had never before experienced. His sunken eyes glowed again with the fires of enthusiasm. Close beside him, her own eyes filled with tears, Joan sat quietly weeping.

"I'll just make that simple test that you have suggested down there, Joan," pointing to it on her memorandum, "and immediately I'll have what I want. I'll have my needed link. I'll be compelled to refine it, and improve it, but I'll work at that night and day—and—and Joan it is you who have done it—you—not I. You did it—"

Impulsively he took her face between his hands and kissed her on the forehead, in a way that surprised him, once he had done it, and Joan, knowing it was an expression of his gratitude, paled instead of blushing beneath it, from a misgiving that she might never experience the expression of his love.

"You will walk home with me to-night, Jerry, won't you? There are people coming to dinner, and it will be a nice break for you and take all these old electrical cobwebs out of your poor head," she said, to calm him.

"Cobwebs?" he meekly protested. "There have been *serpents,* spiteful and venomous. I have been pretty low. There's no use trying to hide it. I ought to confess it humbly. Why, it isn't an hour since I included our good old friend Tom Manly in my evil thoughts—suspected him—think of it! Think how weak a man must be when he will wrong a lifelong friend, even in thought. Wonderful Tom! And I was weak enough to have wronged others, too," he added, thinking of the spoon which he had laid beside the knife.

"What was it about Tom that bothered you, Jerry?" she asked, suspecting the possible need of confession or explanation on her part, too.

"I was contemptible enough to sneer, to say why does *he* not go to the Front."

"I think I ought to tell you why, Jerry."

"He has told you why?" he questioned, puzzled, frankly anxious.

"No, not exactly, but I think I know, and I think you, too, ought to—I mean do you think you would like to know, Jerry?"

"Really, Joan, it does not matter. I love Tom, you know that, just as I love you, just as the three of us love one another."

"But I think he loves one of us a little differently from that—no, I don't mean that he actually does, but that he thinks he does, he says he does—" she hesitated, wanting to go on but finding it hard.

"Yes, Joan?" he encouraged her, looking out of the window, far away over the roof-tops and back into the distance to the Damascus of nineteen hundred years ago, when a dazzling light from Heaven struck a presumptuous egotist, Saul, from his horse and made the egotist a man.

"He said he couldn't go until I—he said he'd go to the Front the moment he knew he could come back to—he's been having a battle between duty and love, Jerry. You know what that—no, you don't know what that means, do you?"

He thought he did. He was sure that he did. He had presumed that she knew all along that he did. He did not comprehend that she had put it so precisely to coax him to contradict her. Mentally the contradiction formed itself, but he forced back the words.

"I sympathize with Tom," he said, adding to himself,

"Chivalrous Tom, waiting for me, deferring to me like that; I'll tell him so, and I must tell her, too, right away, just how she can settle not one but two battles between love and duty."

"Joan," he continued, "I'll tell you, as one of your best friends what I think you—"

"Never! Jerry, never, never—" She knew what he was going to say and could not let him say it. "Never have I encouraged nor could I encourage Tom to—to—to avoid doing his duty. You surely must know that I could not do that."

She feared she had made a mistake in telling him. She was sure she had not done it to prompt him. She had simply felt that he had the right to know. But it was not prompting him. On the contrary it was losing him to her at the very instant when they were closer together than they had ever been before. She could not possibly suffer that.

They just sat there, silent.

The bands were tightening again around Jerry's head. For a delicious minute of exultation over Joan's saving discovery, he had relaxed, only to find himself plunged back into the unsolvable ethical question of his right to ask her.

"It might be right, provided the test comes out satisfactorily," he argued with himself, "and I know it will. I could take a long vacation then, and try to learn to be less wooden and more companionable," he persuaded himself, as his emotions leapt to his devoted companion with unrestrained violence. The blood was beating against his temples faster and faster. His heart was bursting within him. It weakened him. He took her

warm hand awkwardly in both of his trembling own.

"I'm not worthy of you, Joan. I mean it. There's no humbug in saying that—"

She pressed her fingers against his lips to stop him, but he gently took her hand away and would not be stopped.

"I want you, Joan, so much, so much—that—that it's almost making me try to take you in spite of having no right. But taking isn't loving, Joan. Cave-men take, and barbarians take, and some civilized men take, too; but proof of love, and right to be loved, is based on sacrifice alone. Some men may think they love without making any sacrifice to prove their love, but that isn't love. It is what is called by the basest of names. Other men may think they will make the sacrifice when the time comes, but until they do they may have wanted—wanted as terribly as I want you, Joan, but they have not loved, they have merely been selfish, just as I am now, and they have no more right to say they love those whom they take than I have to say that I love you, Joan, when my reason frankly shows me that I have no grounds on which to prove it, because I have never done a single thing for you. As it stands at present I am a disgrace in the eyes of the world to you, and to all my friends. And that's how it would have continued to stand if you had not brought me this blessed suggestion to solve my problem, and that's how it is liable to remain if by some mishap the test is unsuccessful. But, on the other hand, if it is successful, as I confidently expect it will be, then—well, that will be a starting point for me, Joan—it will be like being born again—and—and—"

He called most fiercely upon that strong will of his, so weakly tottering, to stand by him in his struggle to be

honourable, and, in grievous doubt of its strength, hurried to outline the programme to which he knew he must adhere.

"I'll do this test, at once, Joan, and just as soon as it is done—I—I would like to talk to you again—may I?—in the morning, after you have sent your little army on its way—and to-night I'll just stick to it until I finish."

Joan sat very quiet and very happy. He had been holding her hands, and as he slowly dropped them it seemed to him like parting from her.

"I've half a mind to walk as far as the corner with you," he said. "I'll get a breath of fresh air and then come back."

"Yes, come along, Jerry."

Not the real reason, he very well knew, and so did Joan, but she abetted his intention by opening the door.

Side by side they went very slowly down the three long, dark flights of stairs, Jerry holding her arm. Coming out into the crisp autumn air, the bright lights illuminating the street, he thought that it had never looked so wonderful before. The smile on his haggard countenance showed how closely the happiness of relief can simulate the happiness of attainment—how the released prisoner, in the mere restoration of his lost freedom, experiences something of the bliss of the man who has actually achieved the aim of his life.

But suddenly an advertising poster of a soldier in khaki, pointing his finger at him and saying "*You* are wanted," tauntingly struck him full between the eyes and made him wince, as he winced night after night on sight of it. But his smile came back with doubled intensity, as he pulled himself up, squared his shoulders

and almost said aloud to it: "Old chap, I am going to be able to look you squarely in the face before this time tomorrow night!"

It seemed to him an incredibly short time before he halted at the corner in the glare of Pogo's great electric sign beckoning him, beckoning everybody, into the Moving Picture Palace.

They had not spoken a word.

When Jerry purchased the six o'clock issue of the *News* he silently gave the newsboy an extra coin, and he was conscious of an inclination to call every newsboy in sight and dole out largesse to them all.

Joan was thinking how supremely happy people can sometimes be without saying a single word to each other. But she broke the silence first.

"Mr. Pogo is coming to dinner, Jerry. It is going to be a really nice dinner. Hadn't you better change your mind and come along, too? Such a little walk as you have just taken is not enough distraction."

He turned and looked at her, saying nothing. Something was glistening on her lower lids, and he knew her mouth was trembling. He was conscious of wanting to do just what she wanted him to do, right there at the corner.

At the corner!

Meeting place of life's currents. Tarrying place for many. Parting place for others. Turning point for some.

What was it to be to them—the corner in their lives?

Their corner.

There is one in every life.

"Joan," he murmured, "I've known you nearly two years, now, haven't I?"

"Yes, Jerry."

Silence again. He was worshipping her with eyes that bared his soul to all the world passing them by at the corner—their corner—the corner never to be forgotten—the corner destined to become so famous in her unconventional career.

Her instinct hinted to her that he was hesitating.

"Say it, Jerry."

"Having known you so long, Joan, I was thinking how terrible it would have been if you had not given me this chance to—to—keep knowing you—how unbearable it would have been for me to have—to have had to stop knowing you—"

He frightened her. Was her instinct telling her that he was going to fail with the test? Had she been building a castle in the air? What was this dark cloud that his words were dragging between her and her happiness? Abruptly she stopped him.

"Jerry—take me—please—to-night," she pleaded.

The flame shifted from his heart to his face and eyes.

Irresistible—merciless—overwhelming impulse!

"Play fair, you failure—play fair" he kept repeating to himself.

Right there in the brilliant rays of Pogo's electric sign he could hardly restrain himself from taking her beautiful little form into his arms.

It would not be long, he promised himself on oath—not longer than this blessed night's work that was to bring to them the morning of their lives. His arm slipped tightly round her own, and clasping her fingers in a grip that almost bruised them, he whispered, breaking the tenseness that was holding and hurting them both:

"Tomorrow, Joan; tomorrow we're going to muster out your little army of pals for an extended furlough."

Very tenderly he started her on her way.

She left him standing there, watching her, after making him promise to take half-an-hour's diversion in Pogo's Picture Palace before returning to the loft.

Half-way down South Street she turned to look back at him, and found that he had started to cross, but had stopped in the middle of the street, on his way over to the theatre, and stood staring at his copy of the *News*.

Taxicabs and cars dashed by, narrowly missing him.

Would he never move?

Was he going to be killed in one of his moments of abstraction right before her eyes?

And then just as she could restrain herself no longer, and was about to shriek, he dodged a motor, stepped upon the pavement and passed into the theatre, safe.

It was morning before she knew what it was in Tom Manly's paper that had halted Jerry in the centre of congestion.

IV

Inside the theatre Jerry sank into the only vacant seat, quite close to the screen on which was being flashed a series of war pictures, which he watched with unseeing eyes. Mentally he was absorbed in his recollection of the article in the *News* modestly stating that "the editor, Thomas Manly, was about to leave direct for the Front."

So Joan had made Tom do his duty—he realized.

And Tom was doubtless going because she wanted him to do so. And he was certainly hoping to come back to her and find her pleased with what he would do.

"That's the spirit! That's the spirit of sacrifice! That's got the right ring in it. Wonderful Tom!"

He emphatically shook his head in approval.

"More than I have done!" he repeated to himself. "Would it be more, too, even if I should be successful with my test to-night?"

He stiffened in his seat.

Tom and he in the grip of their contest!

He reached for his hat.

"Friendly rivals!"

His impulse was to rush over to the *News* office and shake hands with his lifelong chum, and tell him in words that might not be explicit, but which Tom would understand, that nothing, absolutely nothing must ever change their friendship. Possibly he should frankly tell Tom how things stood between Joan and himself, contingent upon his success with his test to-night. That would be to give Tom an even break. It would avoid all misunderstandings. Tom would then be the first to congratulate him in the morning if he succeeded, and he was certain to succeed. Yes, he would do that, he decided. He would stay here a few minutes to satisfy Joan's wishes, and then he would go straight to Tom.

Disinterestedly he watched the dreadful film of war's horrors—the horrors into which Tom was about to plunge; dimly and yet distinctly enough he observed the depressing influence upon the rows of drooping figures, whose silence poorly masked the misery of their hearts. How much longer could these poor people bear up under their daily increasing strain? They were on the verge of madness, all of them. He was sure of it. He recognized the symptoms in their exclamations of horror. If any

man could understand, was it not he, who had been so nearly mad himself? It had taken a miracle of help to save him. His body, mind and heart were aching still. This was but a temporary abandonment to his sense of relief—this respite that he was enjoying at the moment.

"God help them! God make them stronger than I have been!" he silently ejaculated.

As the film flickered on to its heartrending conclusion, a distinct nervousness came over the audience. Something akin to a flutter of emotion passed quickly through the house. It was like the ominous bubbling of overheated lava at the volcano's brim before it boils over and finds release. People hurriedly rose in various parts of the theatre. Subdued voices became louder, louder. Towards the rear there was a distinct commotion. In front of him two little girls began to cry. He leaned over to shield them from a burly fellow crushing past them.

"Lights—turn on the lights," a woman shrieked hysterically.

Where were the men whose job it was to turn on those lights?

The people were beating their way out of the place, each for himself.

The crowd had suddenly gone stark mad. It was in an uncontrollable panic.

Stampeded off his feet, Jerry was caught up and catapulted through a set of broken doors into a vestibule jammed with shouting and fighting men and women, who quickly squeezed him out into a street packed with maniacs, shouting and bellowing at the utmost pitch of their voices, and jostling one another in unrestrained confusion, as they swayed round newsboys who were rapidly

selling extra editions of the newspapers to purchasers who, in their excitement, left their coins with the vendors without waiting for change.

Jerry grabbed a copy of the *News* and consternation propped his eyelids wide apart as he read his sentence to eternal obloquy in the enormous black head-line:

"WAR ENDS."

V

"It's a lie!" he screamed, suffocating, grasping at any hope, as he remembered the German operator holding the wireless circuits open for news from General Headquarters an hour ago. Oh, if he had only continued to "listen-in" instead of despairingly tearing the wireless receivers from his ears!

"It's a German lie," he screeched above the babel, holding a man by the shoulders and shouting in his face.

"Can't you see it's a German lie?" he repeated, building on that his only hope of acquittal of the stigma of having failed to produce his invention before the end of the war.

"What's all your anxiety to make it untrue, Englin?" the fellow roared back at him. "Are you sorry it's over?"

The hilarious crowd had no patience with the distracted figure furiously beating the air with his hysterical protests as he was pushed along by one angry shove after another in his breathless haste to reach the loft and learn the truth from his faithful wireless.

At the vestibule to the staircase his over-wrought body faltered, tormented by his maddened mind, as he came face to face again with the khaki-clad soldier on the bill-poster mockingly pointing at him his finger of scorn.

Stumbling up the stairway, he kicked in the door that he could not wait to open, and as it swung back clear of him on its hinges it seemed to strike him squarely on the head, so terrible was the beating pain that leapt back into his temples and threatened to burst his skull.

Wildly strapping his head-gear close to his ears he crouched there, shaking, appalled.

It was not a lie! The Germans had actually asked for an armistice! The news of their surrender was true! The armistice announcement was possibly premature; it might require a day or two to be confirmed in detail, but it was obviously true, or about to be true. The war was over! And he was damned!

Another day, another hour and he would have proved to the people, what the Government already believed—that his struggles in the loft were more valuable to the nation than would have been his small service, even the sacrifice of his life, at the Front. But now he was suddenly stripped of all chance of public rehabilitation, and that in the very hour of his success.

He was a proven coward, and a failure in his countrymen's eyes.

He writhed in agony. The door seemed to fall upon his aching head again.

Forever, if he let himself live, he must be a stranger to his own, to Joan, to Tom—to Tom who would not have to go to the Front now—and who deserved her.

Crash went the door upon his throbbing head again and again!

From a drawer he weakly took the War Department's letter commissioning him to continue quietly with his work—encouraging him, persuading him that it was to

the best interests of the nation that he should do so. Irony of fate! Unmerited credential! Unjustified tribute! Useless alibi! How it mocked him!

He wildly ripped the evidence of his loyalty into tatters, strewed the bits about him on the floor, and stamped upon them.

In its place he would leave a message to Joan and Tom.

"Joan," he wrote, trying with trembling fingers to steady the hand that held the pen, "Joan and Tom, my dear pals, it has worked out for the best, and nobody wishes you greater happiness than your old chum, Jerry."

And with that final duty done, the workshop of his labours, hopes and dreams, silent as the tomb, empty now of all that had been precious to him in life, palled upon him. He would leave it, for ever.

Would that door never stop banging?

He looked at it, but it was motionless. Suddenly, as he looked, it began to slap back and forth at a terrific rate, beating him mercilessly on the head each time it moved.

He stumbled, tottering, to his feet, in an effort to go over and stop it—body exhausted, will weakening, mind crumbling to ruins!

Throwing out his arms, as he rose, he saw the door come forward to meet him, felt it crash against his throbbing temples again and slam him headlong down the stairs, hurtling along from step to step until he reached the bottom, where Keating waited for him and kicked him in the face.

CHAPTER IV

I

ON her way home Joan encountered Conny and Girda within a few minutes after watching Jerry enter Pogo's Picture Palace. She had not seen either since the opening of college.

"Why Girda—Conny!" exclaimed Joan.

"Turn right around the other way and come down town with us," greeted Girda.

"Yes, do," added Conny, "we're going for some eats and then to Pogo's."

"No, you two do the turning and come home to dinner with me," insisted Joan, so happy about Jerry that she felt like entertaining the whole world.

"Nix on Church stuff and minister's homes," protested Conny with erudite flippancy. "You're all right, but nobody can get any fun out of eating with saints."

"Margaret's halo might not be on straight and it would worry me," mourned Girda.

"Pogo is having dinner with us," coaxed Joan.

"Pogo at your home—at a minister's home!" shrilled Girda.

"Yes, and Peggy Pogo, too. You'll like Peggy, Conny," urged Joan, "Girda won't mind—"

"Peggy and Girda at a minister's table," incredulously ejaculated Conny. "It's worth seeing. I'm game. Sure we'll go, won't we, Girda?"

"I'll stick it for a round with old Pogo," agreed Girda, visualizing her subjugation of the theatre-magnate and her features pictured upon one of his programmes.

"Wait a moment, Joan," muttered Conny. "Professor

Trueby—Looney Larry—is living with you now, since his breakdown, isn't he?"

"Yes, but he is harmless."

Conny hesitated. Harmless! Sure, he was always harmless, but a nuisance. Memories of Larry's lecture to him in the tea-shop were still fresh in his mind.

"Say, Joan, I can't go that old nut," Conny demurred.

"I'll seat you next to Peggy, Conny."

"I'll go," promptly responded Conny, with a quizzical look at Girda.

II

"This is the house of God," appropriately greeted the Rector's parrot, as the trio entered the hall—the only bit of wisdom that this plumed graduate from a monastery knew how to utter—purposely remindful to the progressive Rector of the "blighting limitations" of some other products of the seminary.

"There's Joan, now, Larry. Hello, Joan!"

Margaret's voice welcomed Joan as, with her extra measure of happiness brimming her little heart, she entered the dining-room of the Reverend Matthew Holden's home; her home, too.

"Hello everybody! Good evening, Daddy Holden." A relation almost filial and paternal had sprung up between her and the Rector. 'Lo Margaret, 'lo Larry—"

The Rector intervened and introduced her to his guests.

"Mr. Pogo, Miss Pogo, this is Joan, our Joan; Mr. Victor Pogo and Miss Peggy Pogo, Joan—"

"My compliments to the star of the house," belched pudgy Pogo, noiselessly clapping his hands like one of his audience, "and quite a nice little dramatic entrance—"

"Timely, wasn't it?" suggested Larry.

"Pleased to meet you," said perky Peggy, gulping down an unusually copious measure of envy.

"The pleasure is mine, Miss Pogo," politely responded Joan, and added, "I have some guests to present, too."

"Yes, look what the cat brought in," burlesqued irrepressible Girda in the back-ground, as she pulled Conny forward by the ear.

Mortifying memories of roisterous college days and impudent college ways!

"Pert product of modern education," alliteratively reflected Larry.

The Rector greeted Joan's guests in a kindly, ironical manner.

Pogo and Peggy snubbed them.

Margaret smiled, and Larry grinned at them.

"We have been missing you, little lady," tactfully interposed the Rector, diverting attention from Conny and Girda in order to subdue them at the commencement of their raillery. He beamed on Joan in his relief at her arrival.

"Joan you never looked more wonderful," added Margaret, who loved and admired Joan almost to the point of worship, and who had divined her father's strategy.

"Miss Joan—asking your pardon," put in Larry, of late the Rector's faithful sexton, butler and all-round handy man at home, since his mental collapse; "it was a little late—our esteemed guests, Mr. and Miss Pogo, have early evening engagements—so we started dinner without you—wishing to be timely—"

"It's quite all right, Larry. Margaret, I'll get even with you for that compliment. Never worry about me,

Daddy Holden, it's a longer walk, you know, since the rectory was moved away from the Church."

She went about getting Conny and Girda satisfactorily seated at table.

This involved altering the seating arrangements as made by Larry, who looked on, somewhat solicitous about the possibility of losing his right-hand neighbour, Peggy, in whom he was sociologically very much interested, and whom he had advantageously placed next to himself in the same designing way that he had sat in front of Conny when he lectured him in the tea-shop.

At the head of the table sat the elderly Rector, clean-shaven, ascetic, dressed, as he himself put it, "like a living human being instead of like an embalmed corpse." He broadmindedly disliked and criticized what he called "clerical livery." It "dulled his point of contact" with his fellow men. He wanted no such "conventionalities" in his life, and apropos of this policy, he remarked at the beginning of the meal:

"This is a purely informal dinner. I don't believe in formalities. Please disregard my calling and be perfectly natural." It was refreshingly hospitable, and evidenced his diplomatic tendency to compromise with irresistible influences.

Churlish Pogo bulged out on the Rector's right. Frail Margaret drooped at her father's left. Larry, in the intervals of his serving duties, had been sitting at the other end of the table, ramblingly contributing pathetic platitudes to the conversation. Joan indulgently let him remain there, where he commented during the meal on the "timeliness" of this, that and the other thing, confided various explanations of his malady to Peggy, and took

reminding little kicks under the table from Joan whenever he threatened to transgress the proprieties.

Joan placed Girda on Pogo's right, and next to herself. That was just where she wanted to be—in the shadow of the moving-picture magnate, so to speak.

Directly across the table opposite Girda Joan seated Conny, on Peggy's right, between her and Margaret. That pleased Conny, too. He began forthwith to give his undivided attention to impish Peggy, watching the effect of his behaviour on Girda out of the corner of his eye.

Girda simultaneously commenced to vamp old Pogo.

Larry enviously and successfully engaged Peggy's interest to the complete exclusion of Conny. Luxuriating in the seeming adulation extended to her from either side, Peggy pretended, mischievously, to prefer her older admirer and ignore the younger. Conny took it to heart and turned crestfallen to Margaret. For him the evening was over before it started.

Pogo irritatingly rejected Girda's advances. For her, too, the curtain was quickly rung down. "It's a rotten show," she decided and turned to Joan.

Margaret and Joan were now compulsorily popular, while the Rector attempted to evangelize disinterested Pogo and Larry lectured to unimpressionable Peggy.

The humour of the situation forced Joan to laugh. Girda and Conny readily took their fun by joining in the laughter, but Conny deliberately laughed direct at Girda, to tantalize her in her discomfiture, and succeeded beyond his expectations.

"Ain't we got fun?" he tauntingly giggled at her.

Girda answered with a well directed kick under the

table, which connected unexpectedly with Conny's knee.

"Wowzo!" howled Conny, as loud as he dared, and let go an answering kick in Girda's direction.

It was Pogo's knee, and not Girda's, that stopped Conny's ill-aimed effort.

"Good Gawd!" bawled Pogo, "what in hell is that?"

"This is the house of God," echoed the parrot from the hall.

Girda and Conny shrieked laughter.

Joan had to laugh, too.

Peggy's set features never altered.

The Rector's features registered tolerant surrender to his pupils.

"This 'purely informal' dinner is becoming 'purely infamous,' " whispered Larry to Joan.

"There's a bull under the table," protested Pogo. He looked across at delicate Margaret, doubting her ability to prod him with such force.

"The show is brightening up," Girda consoled herself, determined to have her fun in some sort of way.

To Conny, the incident naturally suggested making a mark out of Pogo for merriment's sake, as he had so often impertinently done with professors at college. His conduct prompted Larry to whisper to Joan that "coarseness is the conventional course at college."

Conny began abstractedly, as it were, to deposit his ashes in Pogo's butter-plate. Time after time he reached over, as if absentmindedly, for the ash-tray, and sprinkled his ashes on Pogo's butter-plate.

Girda's distended cheeks threatened an explosion.

Pogo paid no attention, but failing in this way to check Conny's contributions, he calmly lit a cigar, deposited

some of his own ashes in the well-filled butter-plate, and accommodatingly pushed it in Conny's direction, towards the middle of the table, icily remarking:

"We can share this together."

Girda's swoollen cheeks collapsed.

"Thank you," stolidly acknowledged checkmated Conny, considerably cooled by Pogo's chilling move. But a moment later he half-turned towards Margaret, and, as if preoccupied with his conversation with her, inadvertently reached over toward Pogo, and dropped not only his ashes, but his cigarette as well, into Pogo's coffee.

Down came Pogo's cigar towards the cup, as if mechanically to follow suit, with Pogo similarly feigning distraction—and deliberately burned the top of Conny's hand.

Girda blew up and burst!

"Bulls and bees," blurted Conny. "I'd rather be poked than stung."

"It will be a good show before we are through with it," spluttered Girda, convulsed with laughter.

And so, the "purely informal" dinner went tolerantly on, while the Rector fretfully pondered, Margaret nervously trembled, Peggy furtively yawned, Conny teasingly joked, Girda provokingly jeered, Pogo magniloquently boasted, Joan regretfully smiled, Larry cynically censured, and the parrot occasionally ejaculated:

"This is the house of God."

III

When the Reverend Matthew Holden entered upon his duties as Rector and found that the parishioners had

moved their homes from the vicinity of Trinity Church, at the end of Newspaper Row, to make way for business, he moved on after them and into their midst. That was characteristic of him, and of the times.

"Under modern conditions, a devoted pastor," he used to say, "must, to a considerable extent, follow rather than lead his flock."

This spirit of tactful conformity to progress pervaded his earnestly prepared sermons. On one occasion, he had summed up his policy from the pulpit thus:

"If I cannot bring you to Religion I must carry Religion to you. If I cannot hold you within the shadow of the Church, I must move myself, and eventually the Church, into your midst. The 'ifs' and conventions of material advancement I cannot control, but I can, and God protecting me, I will, defer to them sufficiently to enable me to keep Him and His Commandments near to your hearts."

This principle of progression had been first accepted and put into execution by the Rector when he resigned his professorship at the college, where Joan, and Jerry and Tom had studied under him, in order to reach, follow and influence through the ministry, a greater number of souls than college limitations provided. He applied the same principle of adaptability to the removal of influence from the Church at the end of Newspaper Row, by aggressively pursuing the removers with his efforts to influence them in the way of God. This practical procedure was the result of his most deliberate consideration of the duties of his calling, and he relied for his consolation upon his efforts to keep close to his flock, to bring back the wanderers, to restrain the wilful.

Pogo fell into the last category. The Rector recognized and admitted the theatre-owner's moral competition with him. Instead of making faces at Pogo he determined to make Pogo think so highly of him and of his efforts, as to render the theatre-owner incapable of the wish to offend him by making the building at the lower end of Newspaper Row more influential for the Devil than the building at the upper end of Newspaper Row was struggling to be influential for God. So Pogo and Peggy had been invited into the bosom of his family, and had condescended to come and stay for an hour.

Next to his devotion to the duties of his calling, the Rector's extraordinary attachment to his talented but delicate daughter Margaret, was an inspiration to those who knew him intimately. Margaret was now nineteen, and her father, in spite of his weak heart and the strain of his long fight for his principles, had, so far, been blessed with eighteen additional years of delightful comradeship with her since the death of his wife when he was forty.

Margaret was one year older than Joan, taller, with noticeably regular and refined features, pale of complexion, sometimes excessively so when the pain in her left side betrayed her inheritance of her parent's weak heart. Her slight hold on life was perilously jeopardized by her selfless devotion to him. Most of her conversation included some reference to her father, such as, "My father read this book," or "My father was saying—" This characteristic of her conversation was pityingly noticed by Peggy, who swayed her parent by the mesmeric pseudonym of "Pop."

Margaret never showed to better advantage than when

seated beside her father, as at dinner. No guest in his house had ever deprived her of her seat at his left. To watch the lights in her eyes, as they followed his conversation, anticipated his wants, applauded his efforts, sympathized with his hurts, was to witness the not unusual phenomenon of a devoted daughter assuming many of the functions of her lost parent in her surviving parent's life—a relation usually characterized by such reciprocity of ideal love as only the intensest mutual sympathy and admiration promotes. When her father was preaching, Margaret sat facing him, revealing to him in her eyes the influence of his words. She was, in everything, his guide. He depended upon her. They were inseparable—so completely so, that the parishioners used to wonder if one would be able to survive the other.

IV

Larry's usually laughable or pathetic inanities brought him very close to the hearts of his listeners. People loved him through pity for his mental sufferings. Whenever Larry was presented to strangers it was the Rector's custom to explain to the guests, as soon as an occasion arose through Larry's leaving the room, that in former days, as Lawrence Trueby, M.A., LL.D., he had been a Professor of Sociology at Trinity College, but suffered a nervous breakdown, with mental consequences, as a result of overwork on a fanatical thesis oddly entitled, "Conventionalism and its Perpetrators"—"since which time," the Rector always added, "he has been our guest, acting as sexton of the Church, butler at home and general helping hand, without ever giving any more aggravated evidences of his malady than a harmless tendency

to diagnose events in terms of their propriety or impropriety, and to pass judgment upon them as to whether they were 'timely' or 'untimely.' "

Invariably following these explanations of his eccentricity by the Rector, Larry, having cannily remained outside the room long enough to let his history be revealed, would return to his seat at the foot of the table and test the effect of the publication of his peculiarities by a confidential conversation with the guest at his right, who on this occasion happened to be Peggy.

"Did he tell you?" he enquired cautiously, leaning down stealthily towards Peggy, and receiving a swift kick under the table from Joan that made him straighten up soberly and remain so, until she had been drawn into the conversation at the head of the table, when he leaned over again towards Peggy, holding his open right hand over his mouth to direct his hushed voice solely in her direction.

"You know, I'm a bit silly," he confided pathetically. "Yes, I've read a great deal about my malady. You see, it's a sickness. I have a certain vacancy of mind, a sort of poverty of intellect, you might call it, a closed perception, but folks just call me 'poor head,' 'feeble minded,' a 'bit touched,' and the boys say I have 'apartments to let.' "

Then he removed his hand and made a business of eating unconcernedly, while stealing furtive glances out of the corner of his eye at Peggy to see how his confidences had impressed her. And when the conversation at the head of the table became sufficiently animated again to warrant it, up went his hand to his mouth, and he continued:

"Did that surprise you? You wouldn't believe it, would you? But it's a fact. I'm not right. I'm unhinged, flighty, daft; a bit of a ninny," touching his forehead, "upper story missing; sort of a bungalow affair. But it's more or less common, you know. Lots of people are narrow-minded, and that's much worse. I'm only weak-minded. What's your trouble? Have you read up on it? We're both a bit foolish, of course, like everybody else, but maybe you're a bigger fool than I am. You're abnormal, you know. You have 'conventionalitis.' Oh yes, you have! Do you want me to tell you how I found it out? Well, you know, I'm pretty sharp, and when I first came into the room where you were sitting, before I had even been introduced to you, and the moment I first looked at you, do you know what you did, as a matter of habit? No; but you'll remember, when I tell you. The instant you saw me glance at you you tried to pull your skirt down lower, even though it wouldn't go any lower. You see what that indicated? That gave your mind away. That showed your low habit of mind. You took it for granted that my first thought about you would be your legs. You do that as a matter of habit every time a fellow looks at you. It shows him what you think of his state of mind. It shows what you abnormally suspect about every man's state of mind. It's stock stuff. It's the vogue. It's 'conventionalitis.' You all do it alike." He contemptuously puckered up his lips and blew through them, adding, "You go with the wind—you're just a ripple."

Joan could not have heard Larry's whispered denunciation, but Peggy's convulsed countenance must have spoken volumes of resentment because the kick that sud-

denly landed on Larry's shin-bone was savage enough to halt him in the midst of his condemnations and make him expostulate:

"Untimely, I say most untimely."

V

As Peggy preceded her ponderous parent into the library, head rigidly erect, eyes coldly uncommunicative, lips tightly set, Larry, looking after her from behind the portieres in the dining-room, mentally amplified his tart diagnosis of her.

Observing her to greater advantage away from the table, he decided that she fitted accurately the simile in his fatal thesis that depicted "a world full of ultra-impressionable damsels resembling in their susceptibilities the wind-tossed ripples of the sea, superficially fascinating, momentarily captivating, matched by lacily fringed thousands on every side, frothy, foamy, effervescent, bubbling and gushing with nothingness, now here, now there, shortly nowhere."

Yes, Peggy was a "ripple," he decided.

Casual inspection of her immobile and vacuous features suggested to Larry dumbness. Closer scrutiny and observation indicated to him that the dumbness was a studied mask of one who had already seen enough, and heard enough, and experienced enough, to be able to make a callous countenance pass for innocence undefiled. Watching her attitude towards the relative whom she dubbed "Pop," revealed to him the hard and solitary will of a child, and a child's petulance and vanity, spoiled, contemptuous, wilful.

"Brought to her present nineteenth or twentieth year

of diabolical wisdom in surroundings of inescapable vulgarity like those maintained by her sordid parent and his profession," he pedantically quoted, "she is hypersensitive to sensuous impressions induced through the medium of her tawdry prettiness, which finds its most effective setting curled up in a corner of a couch, as she is at present.

"A twilight nymph, by dint of many sounding kisses with lips carmined and sweetly profane," he mentally penned her, "overworking her hellish power to drive young men wild, discarding old loves and dead beliefs as a brisk young snake sloughs off his dry skin for a new one, possessed of a past probably already monotonous in its promiscuity, and sopping what conscience remains to her with a philosophy culled from newspapers, whose sordidness has so deadened her womanly instinct as to make her willing to believe it to be true that the 'beautiful must be damned.'"

VI

Victor Pogo and his offspring were uncomfortably out of place when led into the Rector's library. Pogo's "penchant," as he elegantly put it, was "moving pictures, not books." He "had never had much to do with books," he disinterestedly replied, when invited to examine his host's bookcases, filled with the collected treasures of a lifetime, and taking a book presented to him for examination, he let its pages rush like so many cogs beneath his fat thumb, as if testing its revolutions per minute. He then mechanically shoved it back into its place on the shelf, upside down, without even knowing its title.

Depositing his huge bulk in the most comfortable chair in the room, with his back to the books, he lit a cigar, stuck it in his flabby mouth, and blew out his condemnation of literature, with his clouds of smoke, in a commanding and decisive way.

"Books are *passé*," he challengingly growled, not a little satisfied with his epithet, and thinking of the popularity of his end of Newspaper Row, as compared with churches and book shops.

"But they shouldn't be," protested the Rector soothingly, intent upon accomplishing the purpose for which he had invited the theatre-owner and his daughter to his home.

"That doesn't matter," retorted Pogo, rather sulkily. "The fact is, people nowadays don't want books, won't read them, can't be coaxed or forced to go and get them and read them. They want pictures, and they can't be stopped wanting pictures. I am not interested in what should be. I am interested in what is."

It was a very businesslike summing up of the situation. It was a paraphrased censure and conviction of the Rector and his resultless efforts. It was as if he had said:

"Nobody goes to your old Church. Nobody, to speak of, buys any books from your old book store. And you can't make them do it either, because they prefer to come down to my moving pictures."

That was how it sounded to the Rector, and the truth of it hurt. But whenever the discouraging facts of material advancement raised their barrier to his advancement of ethical enlightenment, the Rector's principle of adaptation came to his aid and prompted the particular

strategy he was to use to circumvent the enemy rather than waste time and energy in hopeless direct attack. It came abundantly to his rescue at this crisis in the conversation, as he thankfully realized, in the form of an inspiration that promised him a greatly needed victory over Victor Pogo, with that gentleman's own weapons!

The possibilities opened up by his revelation suddenly engrossed him so completely as to make him long to tackle them at once, and he was as willing to let Pogo take his leave as that much-bored magnate was to go. So, with a meaningless exchange of good wishes, they parted, the Rector believing he had profited tremendously through his wonderful inspiration occasioned by Pogo's visit, and Pogo absolutely certain that he had profited, because busy men of his type never voluntarily give away two hours of their time, except for a liberal cash equivalent; and the promptness with which the theatre-owner had accepted the Rector's invitation would have indicated to anyone other than the Reverend Matthew Holden that Victor Pogo had a very definite financial object in view in visiting him, which would eventually materialize. No man in business can afford to have acquaintances other than those of monetary value to him. Such is the scope of modern friendship.

"Give that to your servant," Peggy rasped contemptuously to Margaret, as she stamped out.

Pogo planned to use Larry, so he had brought a gift suitable to his needs as sexton. But the overwhelming intensity of Larry's embarrassment of Peggy had prevented her from offering it before. She would have taken it back with her now, instead of giving it to him, but it suddenly suggested itself as a means of expressing

rather emphatically her complete contempt for him.

"Tell him it is even more appropriate for him than I expected it to be," she added. "Tell him to lie down and die in it!"

Larry listened with a leer on his face, as he peeped out from behind the curtains. Pogo caught sight of him, and attempted to tone down Peggy's insult by a diplomatic explanation:

"We thought our little remembrance might be serviceable to you for resting purposes, in between times, at your quarters in the Church."

Larry grinningly examined the remembrance when Pogo, Peggy, Conny and Girda had gone. In its way it certainly represented the best that mechanical ingenuity could contrive. Outwardly, when shut up, it resembled a small travelling case. He could pick it up in the evening and carry it down to the Church sacristy without anybody suspecting what it was. Opened up, it revealed a comfortable little folding bed.

"Another of Civilization's dexterous contributions to the delightful art of loafing," contemptuously commented Larry.

" 'Take up thy bed, and walk,' " humorously quoted the Rector from the Scriptures, laughing goodnaturedly.

" 'Lie down and die in it,' are my orders," quoted Larry in derision.

VII

The Rector was radiant, as he faced Margaret and Joan, after the departure of their guests, and outlined his plan.

"The old way of carrying religion to the people was

effective in the olden days, suitable to the people, and the disciples naturally followed the way with which people were familiar," he explained, "but the new world, growing newer every day, is not the old world, and will have none of the old world's methods. People who today fly through the air, play chess with the ether, make clouds in Europe speak to clouds in America with tongues of fire—always performing some new impossibility—refuse to be interested in chariots, camels or ox-carts. They are done with that sort of thing. They are out to get what at present they lack—to use what hitherto they have never had; and the first-class prophet of today is the servant of God, broadminded enough to be able to pick out seeming innovations for transmitting Religion, and bold enough to predict that it will come to pass that these innovations will succeed where archaic methods fail."

He continued with intense and sincere enthusiasm:

"Because a thing *has* been, therefore it must *always* be, represents the mentality of most clergymen. The clerical veneration for uniformity, the passion of the clergy for the stereotyped, their tragic inelasticity of mind, have eaten out the heart of Religion and accomplished the bankruptcy of our churches.

"And so I have come, in this age of changes, to be sympathetic towards the minister of God's Word who struggles, in a modern way, to have his parishioners understand that Religion is no killjoy affair, no spoil-sport business, and decorously, even if somewhat radically, seeks to have God enter their hearts by their own entrances, through dignified conviviality, even through moving pictures, if necessary, or through dances—"

"But can't the people get all that sort of thing outside the Church and get it better?" Joan interrupted. "Must a minister be a movie-maniac, and a jazz-artist, and a nicotine-fiend, and even a drinker, just because other people have these crazes? Is it necessary for him to submit and surrender to every influence he meets—to Pogo—to Conny—to Girda—to—"

"We must make Religion attractive to such people," solicitously replied the Rector, "especially to types like Conny and Girda. They are the coming fathers and mothers of our nation."

"I like Conny and Girda," Joan started to reply.

"I don't," interrupted Margaret.

"—And I can easily appreciate their possibilities," continued Joan, "but I am thinking of what I once heard Jerry say."

What Jerry said was gospel to her. Absorbed as she was with her thoughts of him, her mind naturally reverted to him.

"Jerry said that 'a woman functions normally and best by influence, rather than by direct action.' He said that as a sort of friendly warning against women usurping the aggressive prerogative of men. It meant a great deal to me. It meant that women can dominate men—actually do the deeds of men—without being mannish. I think ministers can also dominate the actions of vulgar people without dropping down to their vulgar level. They can inspire them. For a woman or a minister to become over-aggressive is to be a failure."

The little mother of the tea-shop! Dominant!

"How do you account for such satisfied authoritativeness in her?" Tom had one day asked over his tea.

"Instinct," explained Jerry, inviting a repetition of Girda's caustic commentary upon his extensive (?) knowledge of women. "Mysterious, dependable instinct, so highly developed in some women."

"The education of experience," alliteratively suggested Larry. "Travel, death, sorrow, solitude, introspection—it may be fatal."

The Rector made no reply to Joan.

"Do you really think a minister must submit to convention, to the accepted channels of progression, to the so-called 'social controls'?" Joan feelingly pressed him.

"Unfortunately, or rather surprisingly, yes, to a certain extent; but not exaggeratedly, in the way I fear you indicate, and of course not wrongly," replied the Rector, with conviction. "Exaggerated opposition to convention is sometimes more fatal than unconditional surrender to it," he continued, looking in the direction of Larry, who had just left the room. *"The penalty for oddness is dementia."*

It was just about this moment, while the Rector was uttering these words, that Jerry Englin crashed beneath the ruins of his isolated efforts to conquer and control the arch propagators of precedent, with Keating's leering face mocking him in his delirium.

"I don't want to be eccentric in anything," retorted Joan, unconvinced, "and I certainly am not inviting any catastrophe like that which has come to poor Larry, but I can't capitulate to followers and worshippers of what's usually done or what's usually not done—I mean this manufactured uniformity that so continuously clashes with a person's best instincts—you can call it convention, or custom, or fashion, or vogue, or the social code, or

just plain mimicry, it doesn't matter—if that's sanity then I am an embryo lunatic, like Larry."

Margaret, watching her father's eyes during Joan's hot little challenge, observed him react sympathetically to her ultimatum. She could see that there was a conflict going on in his mind. He had never been impulsive. He might be expected to consider every move before making it. Finally he said:

"You are both right and wrong, Joan, and I also am both right and wrong. It's a terrible problem—my seemingly unsolvable problem—God help me. But I have been thinking that I am going to try to beat an enemy of the Church's influences with his own weapons, and, as an experiment at least, I am going through with it. Mr. Pogo draws my flock to his theatre by moving-pictures; I am going to draw them back to the Church by the same means. It will be an illuminating study. It may be a success. I pray that it will be. Let me see. This is Friday. On Sunday I will announce from the pulpit that on the following evening there will be *free* moving-pictures in the Church. We will exhibit the most uplifting film that we can procure, and, in God's interest, we will analyze the good and the evil in it, in an effort to appeal to the heart through the eye, as well as through the ear. On second thoughts, I will give the announcement to the Press by telephone immediately, so that the morning papers will prepare my people to come back to me instead of going to Mr. Pogo."

There was a decisive finality in his diction which he promptly reinforced and emphasized by going to the telephone and trying to call up the editorial rooms of the *News*. Failing to get an answer, he tried the *Record*.

Failing with the *Record,* he again tried the *News.* Back and forth several times for several minutes, he unsuccessfully tried each newspaper, wondering if their employees had all suddenly gone on a vacation. Eventually he got both of them, and in a dignified way communicated to them his announcement. A minute later he knew why he had failed to get them promptly.

The deafening shrieks of Pogo's vulgar motor-siren split the air.

"Mr. Pogo has forgotten something," exclaimed Margaret.

The theatre-magnate's rakish and extravagantly long automobile was drawing up to the kerb. Pogo had driven direct from the parsonage to both newspapers, down town, where he left certain important announcements, learned about the impending Armistice, and was now driving madly around to the homes of prominent friends, doing his part to fill their hearts with some of the down-town frenzy, and calculating, in an advertising way, on an increase of their good will in return for his thoughtfulness. Incidentally he was having a riotously good night of it, violating the speed laws and waking the dead with his obscene horn.

"Read that, Holden," he roared, as Peggy tossed two newspapers at the trio who had started down from the doorstep to the car at the kerb. A moment later he was on his noisy way again.

Larry led the group back into the light with the newspapers, and opened up the front pages with their gigantic headlines:

"WAR ENDS."

"Thanks be to God," the Rector murmured reverently.

"Oh—oh—oh—oh," ejaculated Margaret, clutching nervously at her weak heart.

"Most untimely, overshadowing our morning announcement," commented Larry.

And Joan, speechless, turned deathly white.

VIII

The morning papers, overcrowded though they were with the world's greatest sensation, found ample room for the local sensation, which they created out of the two announcements given to them by Pogo and the Rector, unknown to each other.

The morning *Record* and *News* published identical notices, obviously penned by the same hand, to the effect that "The Reverend Matthew Holden, Rector of Trinity Church, at the north end of Newspaper Row, had as his dinner guest last evening Mr. Victor Pogo, proprietor of 'Pogo's Picture Palace' at the south end of Newspaper Row. The Rector and the popular theatre-owner spent a very pleasant hour together going over Mr. Pogo's splendid educational work, in which the Rector is keenly interested."

Pogo's secret intention in accepting the invitation to dinner was out!

In consternation and astonishment, the Rector heatedly denounced as the work of the devil this misuse of his hospitality for the purpose of advertising the competitive influence at the other end of the street, by claiming his sanction of it, and he promised Mr. Pogo a shot in the afternoon papers which would open his eyes to the fact that the Lord is no mean competitor. God helping him, he would make the Church's competitive use of moving-

pictures drive the devil out of business at Pogo's end of Newspaper Row.

Simultaneously with Pogo's announcement, the morning *Record* and *News* published similar, but not identical notices, telling the public that Trinity Church would exhibit Free Moving-Pictures. The *Record* emphasized the impending "competition" of the Church with Pogo's Picture Palace.

The Rector's announcement was "great stuff" for the reporters, and they waited upon him willing to give him all the free space that he wanted. He had "started something," and nobody understood that more intimately than Pogo. When that potentate billiously read his morning papers, and perceived how effectively his antagonist's publicity-move checkmated his own, and calculated a probable shrinkage in his shekel-bag, he hit the breakfast table a rap that made the sugar jump out of the bowl.

"I'll show these papers that their free publicity belongs to me," he howled. "Who pays their enormous advertising bills, I should like to know? Not a minister, who would put them out of business if he could. I'll show this preacher chap that he has taken on a heavyweight when he goes up against an insider with the influential business connections of Victor Pogo."

The war was on!

The Rector's afternoon return volley appeared only in the *News*, and inconspicuously enough to suggest that this paper had been more or less successfully approached on Pogo's behalf. The notice stated that "the Rector of Trinity Church had determined to make Monday night's first production of moving-pictures so successful that succeeding presentations would become the most

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popular in the city, and in order to rally the young folks around the Church's effort it had been decided to hold a dance in the Church basement on Monday night, following the pictures."

"That means letting 'em in free, and giving 'em a premium for coming," angrily commented Pogo when he read it. "I'll stop Holden and I'll stop the *News*."

The *Record's* omission of the Rector's afternoon notice, coupled with a brief editorial on the "Impropriety of Church Movies," showed that this paper had been quite satisfactorily "approached" on Pogo's behalf, and a spread-eagle advertisement of the Picture Palace, on an inside page, confirmed this impression. In between the lines of the advertisement and the editorial was a poorly concealed intimation that the *Record* was spoiling for a fight with the *News* on the merits of movies in the Church, not because the *Record* suffered any scruples about encouraging an impropriety, but candidly because it was good newspaper policy to decry anything that interfered with the money-making activities of the interests which paid them tribute.

To Tom Manly, Keating's editorial, professionally interpreted, said this:

"I have the jump on you! I am an older and therefore a wiser newspaper man than you are. I have just shown you that by siding in with our financial supporters against this Church business before you are even awake. You are out of step with the interests. I am standing by them. Quit your support of this Church business and you admit I am right. Keep it up and I'll fight you to a finish on it. I'll ruin you with your supporters. I dare you to fight."

Was this little additional mention which Tom Manly had given to the Rector's project—not because he favoured it but from fear of offending Joan if he refused it—was this bit of free publicity going to precipitate one of the usual cat-and-dog fights between rival newspapers?

Would the *News* and *Record* straightway start to call each other nasty names, scold each other like children, thrust their spites upon their readers without giving them an inkling of the real reason for their quarrel, and by hideous repetition intensify public interest in the Rector's venture, already more important locally than the signing of the Armistice?

The decision lay with Tom Manly.

Early on Saturday afternoon he went to Englin's laboratory to beg Joan to persuade the Rector to abandon his project.

CHAPTER V

I

JOAN left the house on Saturday morning to go to the loft, striving piteously to stifle her misgivings, in her most optimistic manner, by forced little ejaculations expressing her determination to be patient in the face of whatever might have been Jerry's failure with his test. She refused to let the chilling autumn rain dull her usual brightness. She sharply rebuked her grave dread of how the Armistice might have affected Jerry, by repeating:

"How could anybody be anything but happy on a morning blessed with such wonderful news!"

The lightened faces of pedestrians helped her in her battle. At "the corner" a greeting yelp from the "sooner" brought the wet and bedraggled first corps of her army into line. As always, it warmed her heart to reflect how easy it is to make happiness for oneself by making it for others.

"Paregoric, don't you know enough to keep out of the wet? You fellows have messed this stairway shamefully this morning," she protested to her full battalion dashing up the steps of the loft with muddy feet. Reaching the top, the forces swept through the broken and open door into the outer office.

"So Jerry has opened the door and is waiting to help me 'ration the garrison' as he promised," she realized, as she hurried in after her hungry companions.

"Where's your superior officer?" she demanded, as she reached the entrance, knowing very well that he was hiding behind the open door of the inner room.

"Jerry," she called, and a hound answered with his dismal howl, supposing she meant him.

"Jerry!"

No answer.

"He has gone out for rolls or cream," she decided. "He will be back soon."

She crossed to the window and looked out over the fire-escape at the countless figures, many of them drenched through, scurrying along in the rain.

"Jerry will get wet," she worried.

Then she set about heating the water for tea, making the army protestingly wait for Jerry's return, and when she prepared the table she placed the spoon beside the knife, both his and hers.

This was her happy betrothal morn.

"I just knew he had been here before me, and gone out," she suddenly exclaimed, as she saw his last evening's copy of the *News* still unfiled. There were two copies, the six o'clock edition, and the later extra edition, published half an hour afterwards with the Armistice headlines. Filing them away for him, she noticed in the six o'clock edition the account of Tom Manly's projected departure for the Front.

"Tom!" she exclaimed, in admiration.

It sent a thrill of great happiness through her. It made her feel very proud of him.

"He might not have done it if I had not been firm with him. Tom did it for me. . . . Strange, that I did not see that notice in the later edition last night!"

She looked at the later edition. No, it was not there.

But, of course, there was no need to print it after the war was over. Tom would not have to go, now.

She was quite sure, she thought, that this was purely a matter-of-fact reflection and that there was no feeling in it whatsoever.

All her happiness was coming to her on one morning, she discovered.

Happy, happy day!

. . . . . .

A moment later she found Jerry's note—

Unutterably brutal blow!

Felling her with a fatal scar!

From the height of joy to the depths of misery and dread!

Down—aghast—breathlessly down—in a heap!

The violence of the descent dropped her, helpless, in a faint.

Oblivion, nature's temporary solace to tormented womanhood, mercifully embraced her.

And her befriended animals, with mute reverence, waited quietly watching, for not even an animal can look unmoved upon a woman's suffering. It is what has many a time moved beasts to submission, men to fury, and nations to war.

When the cool air of the unheated room finally brought her back to her senses, and her bruised mind rose again to grapple with this monstrous invasion of her happiness, the blear-eyed, shaggy mongrel whom she called "Paregoric" was soothingly licking the hand that had so regularly provided food, and for this sympathy her first act was to pat the dumb but devoted creature upon the head.

For a long time she could not control herself. Pressing her temples with both hands, she repeated like a child:

"He will come back soon. He will come back soon."

With measureless yearning, she repeated his name again and again, nervously stretching out her arms to his chair, to his motors, to his coils, as if to find him there, whence she had never known him to be missing. To lose him, never to see him again, was unthinkable!

"He will come back soon."

She knew that she could not go on as she should without him. For the first time in her life she sensed the limitations of mortal independence. Something vitally identified with the normal trend of her existence had been sundered, like a rudder torn from a tossing ship.

The intense anguish of her loss—of what he had meant to her—measured the depths of her love of him. Her long and close association with him flashed through her memory. She saw him beside her at school, on their walks, at their work in the laboratory. She heard his slow and deliberating voice, watched his skilful hands manipulating his switches and coils, felt the influence of his serious personality. He seemed to her a hundred times more earnest and lovable, and when she realized that all of this, that had been a part of her, and so fixed in her heart, was gone—a pain pierced her breast so sharply that she wanted to beat her fists against it until it too had gone and taken her breath with it.

Strive as she would, she failed in her efforts to think calmly about searching for him. Gradually she decided that he would not want her to do so. But neither had he wanted her to ask him to take her before he made his test, and perhaps she should have forced her will upon him. Yet it did not seem natural to her to do what her instinct told her he did not want her to do.

For an hour or more she kept telephoning the land-

lady at his lodgings, to which he had never returned.

Thinking of his experimental test made her wonder if he had failed at it and gone because he failed, or if he had gone because the war ended before he succeeded with it, or if he had gone for both reasons—because of the sudden ending of the war and because he had failed. She would see. Investigation revealed that he had not even started his test. Her memorandum lay untouched upon his table.

He had been overtaken by the end of the war before even making the test, she decided.

That gave her her cue. She would try to make the tests herself, and he would come back.

But the thought of attempting to carry on his work brought her up sharply face to face with the stern realities of her situation.

There could be no income for her in the meantime, she disinterestedly calculated, with Jerry gone and his invention unfinished. Of course there were his other inventions which he had turned over to the Government, for which, however, recompense would necessarily be delayed by war's exactions. She could not subsist indefinitely, she recognized, particularly if she had to pay the laboratory rent. She would have to close it up, eventually, if he did not return; but she was sure he would return, and she would keep the workshop going as long as she was able financially to do so, though that could not be for very long.

"I know he must return, because he needs me," she comforted herself, instinct rather than conceit prompting her to say so. It was as much a confession of her dependence upon him as it was a declaration of his dependence upon her.

On his desk lay his diary, open at his last entry.

The diary of his fanciful analyses of women. Women! —whose characteristics and reactions to fixed conditions apparently interested him analytically like his scientific examinations of chemical and physical and electrical phenomena.

The diary of his thoughts of Joan that he had never felt justified in revealing to her.

Like a legacy to her—like a parting message:

"Abnormal women paradoxically profess their self-sufficiency. Notoriety is their reward. They glitter on our bill-boards and in our newspaper columns. Normal women instinctively express themselves through their beloved, by inspiration and encouragement. His success and prominence are their aim. They cloister themselves in the homes of our illustrious statesmen and captains of industry. The nation knows them only by reflection, through the accomplishments of their loved ones. It requires a catastrophe to the instrument of their influence to bring them to the front and force them to assume his place, although there have been occasions when, in so doing, they have not only re-established him but won to him and to his efforts more followers than he could have won himself.

"Such a woman I have known—Joan!

"God helping me, I will merit her.

"Meriting her, I could face the whole world and conquer it with the inspiration which she would give me.

"Failing, God give me strength to go from her, never to return.

"And if she should care and miss me, God give her strength to be and remain true to that wonderful instinct

of hers—true to that alone which it is a good woman's stupendous privilege to be— a woman."

Man's adoration of the mother and guardian of men!

His legacy to her.

Like an admonition and a warning and a prophecy!

So like her own brave little exhortation to the Rector to be and remain a minister.

Seeming to counsel her not to try to carry on his work.

Shattering her hope of his return by its reminder of the strength of his will.

"Never to return," she repeated in despair, and feebly tried to make it untrue by sobbing, "he must return."

"Yelp—yelp," whiningly supplicated one of the unfed dogs.

"Paregoric, suppose there isn't enough to eat around here, will you and your gang find somebody else to take care of you?" she enquired, with mock seriousness, making a heroic attempt to be happy, as she started to feed her hungry cohort.

Paregoric, Pickles, Carbureter, Powder Puff, Crêpe de Chine, Hookworm, Ice Cream Soda, Sour Stomach, Small Change, Tonsolitis and Caruso barked a very vociferous protest which plainly demanded:

"When do we eat?"

When fed her friends left her—left her alone with all that remained to her—memory—and the sad voice of the lone singer intensifying her anguish:

"The mind will, in its worst despair,
Still ponder o'er the past,
On Moments of delight that were
Too beautiful to last;
To late departed scenes extend

Its vision with them flown,
For Memory is the only friend
That Grief can call its own."

II

Shortly before noon the telephone in the loft gave a violent ring followed by a succession of rings.

Joan's heart stood still.

"Jerry!"

She seemed to be paralyzed and unable to move towards the instrument.

"Ting-a-ling, ling, ling, ling—"

"He's in a hurry," she realized, as she clutched the telephone and almost shouted:

"Yes, Jerry—"

"Hello, hello, Joan! is that you?"

It was a woman's voice! Yes, she knew now, it was Margaret. Margaret was going to break the news to her about what had happened to Jerry. She was sorry she had answered the telephone, and afraid to receive the news.

"Hello, hello, why don't you answer? Is that you, Joan?"

"Yes, Margaret."

"I should scarcely recognize your voice. Is anything wrong?"

"No—yes—no, nothing. What is it, Margaret?"

"Joan, Maud Edgar has been in and wants to come up and see the laboratory; may she? I forgot to ask you about it last night."

So that was all! Somehow she felt both disappointed and relieved.

"If it would be convenient, Margaret, I would prefer her to come some other day. I'll arrange it with you, to-night."

That disposed of Margaret for the time being, without disclosing to her what had happened. In ten minutes the telephone rang again.

"That's Margaret wanting Maud to come up to-day, after all," she thought, as she quickly picked up the instrument without even thinking about Jerry.

"Yes, Margaret," she spoke into the receiver.

"Guess again, Joan," replied a man's laughing voice. "I would certainly like to be as prominent in your thoughts as Margaret seems to be; but instead of being your Margaret, I am merely Tom Manly."

"Why, Tom—"

"How are you, Joan?"

"Why—I—I am all right, Tom, and how are you? It was simply splendid of you to decide like that to go. I read it in—"

"Aren't you glad I don't have to—aren't you glad the war is over, Joan?"

"No—I mean yes, of course I am glad it is over, only"—she hesitated. Should she tell him about Jerry?

"May I come up for a moment?" he enquired.

She had never prevented him from coming before. Jerry and Tom and she had enjoyed many pleasant chats together in the loft. She could not decently ask him not to come. Her delay in answering prompted him to add:

"I know you are busy, Joan, but I have something very important to speak to you about."

Was he intending to tell her about Jerry? Did he already know? Had Jerry been to see him? Had Jerry

sent him a note? Did he know the contents of the note that Jerry had left for her—for her and for him? Yes, there was every reason to have him come up as quickly as he could.

"Certainly, Tom, come up at once," she told him.

"I'll be there in a minute, Joan."

Masterful Tom Manly radiated prosperity as he entered the loft. Well-groomed to the tips of his evenly manicured nails, tanned by many an afternoon of golf, tall, straight, smiling, well-mannered, keen of mind, sharp of eye, direct of speech, he was as much a man's man as a woman's man. Joan never realized his superiority over the average man more keenly than she did at the moment he entered the workshop that had been deserted by poor beaten Jerry.

"I suppose Jerry is in there breaking his head over one of his puzzles," he commenced, nodding to the door that Joan had purposely closed and as much as telling her that he did not know where Jerry was.

She made no answer, and he continued, going direct to the object of his visit:

"Joan, I think you know I am a friend of all of your friends, and I am supposed to be a newspaper man. It is both as a friend and as a newspaper man that I have come to advise you to ask the Rector to cancel this moving-picture show and dance at the Church on Monday night. He can do it from his pulpit tomorrow morning."

Tom Manly's method was to get what he wanted, to take in spite of every obstacle, and he had come expecting to be opposed but determined to do what he had set out to do, for Joan's sake, for the Rector's sake, and for his own sake in beating Keating, who had him at a disadvantage.

"But why, Tom?" Joan enquired.

Manly spread out on the table the fresh afternoon editions of the *News* and *Record*. He showed her Keating's editorial attack on the Rector and his own notice about the dance.

"For several reasons, Joan, and first of all because the Rector is going to bring odium on you by bringing it on himself, through a failure followed by harmful newspaper notoriety."

"Tom, I certainly appreciate your consideration for me, as well as for the Rector, but I think he is naturally a better judge of what is best for the promotion of his work than you are. I myself may not be in accord with his plan, but I defer to his judgment."

"Well, Joan, suppose I should be able to prove to you that his plan is bound to come to grief?"

"But your paper will support it, so it cannot come to grief, no matter what Keating does."

"That's just the point. Our paper may not only *not* support it but will probably be compelled to condemn it."

"Tom, you would never do that."

The way in which she said it made him understand that it would require very great outside pressure upon him to make him hurt her. But he outlined the possibilities, and spoke his mind clearly, without reservation:

"Pogo is angry and influential. He could stop advertising with us. We could stand that. But his business interests are interlocked with ours. He might be able to induce banks to call in our loans or to call in the loans of concerns that support us. Before I start to edit the morning's paper to-night I expect to be ordered to oppose the Church's entrance into the moving-picture business. And,

apart from hurting you, it would not make us feel badly to attack this radical departure, because it is unpractical and ill conceived. You know that as well as I do. This is the only world we can live in, and to get along in it we must get in tune with its vast and complicated scheme of business organization and influence. We may not like it, but in order to live, we are compelled to get along with it. No practical man will invite the ill-will of banks. No sensible man will choke off his existence by making it impossible for himself to obtain needed money. He may say that 'money isn't life', but it actually is. It is the price of existence, and the money-makers control life. Why, even the Churches admit and get along on that principle. Play the game according to the set rules, stand in with the crowd. Break the rules or 'get in wrong' with the crowd and we are through—"

"That sounds very interesting, Tom, and the most interesting part of it is your intimation that 'this getting along with things as they are' may be all wrong. Why don't you develop that idea and publish it?"

"There is no—well, what an editor would call 'copy' in that. It is not the sort of stuff that will sell an editor's paper to the ordinary man in the streets."

"Surely you are big enough to make it sell your papers?"

"Joan, the penalty of unsuccessful innovation is annihilation!"

"I think that even I could do it." She stuck to her point.

"Joan, do you think you could break the newspapers to your will?"

"Tom Manly," she shot back at him, thinking of what the *Record* had done to Jerry, "the high-and-mighty way

in which you say that shows that a newspaper tyrannically arrogates to itself dominion over all of us. You have us at your mercy. You do with us whatever you please and we are helpless. If for any reason, good or bad, we make you angry, you trample us as a vicious stallion would. If we seem funny to you then you amuse yourselves with us, just like a wanton child who picks a butterfly to pieces."

He felt that the argument had gone far enough. He had been unsuccessful, but he was not one to give up in a single attempt. Jerry might be able to help him influence her, he decided, and enquired:

"When will Jerry get through for the day, Joan? I should like to see him."

"He usually stops shortly before six," she said evasively, unable to tell him that Jerry was not there. "He will come back soon," her instinct repeated to her, and it had never deceived her yet. "Maybe he will be here when Tom returns," she uselessly comforted herself, with nothing but hope in which to justify her optimism.

"May I come back, then, at six o'clock, Joan?"

She could not refuse him, and yet, as she agreed and watched him go—persevering, likable Tom Manly—she wondered if her sensations had actually ever given real battle to that instinct of hers upon which she relied so much. Tom Manly was always a fighter, always took what he wanted, she remembered. And that attitude had always challenged her opposition. It had never previously dominated her. It had never heretofore seriously entered her mind to suspect that he might master her in anything. His aggressiveness seldom failed to win her secret admiration and yet invariably provoked her open defiance. She had never examined the reason for this before. It

occurred to her now that there might be a racial or national reason for it. She might have it in her conservative blood to resent being rushed. She must conquer that impulsive tendency, she decided, or at least control it, rather than let it arbitrarily master her. Actuated by this decision, almost involuntarily she rose and went to the window to watch Tom cross the street to the offices of the *News* but as she saw him dash briskly through the rain her thoughts flew to the other man, who, like Tom, but in a different way—retiringly—had always been so much a part of her life, probably at that moment plodding aimlessly, dejected and drenched to the skin—perhaps dying!

III

The burly form of a big policeman appeared in the doorway of the outer office.

Joan quivered—like something crumbling—knees giving way beneath her again.

Jerry was dead!

Now she was to hear the particulars.

All the sorrows of a lifetime were crowding in upon her in a single morning, she discovered.

What had she ever done to merit such cruel punishment?

She sank into a chair and protestingly raised her hands in front of her eyes, as if to ward off the impending blow.

She could not endure it. She did not deserve it. It seemed brutally unjust.

"Madam," blustered the towering policeman.

She could make no answer.

"Madam," he repeated, with commanding emphasis,

"are you the keeper of this canine menagerie up here?"

"This what?" she faltered.

"This dog-army," he sneered, "this four-legged procession that follows you up here from the corner, every morning. You'll have to cut 'em out. The *Record* next door objects to it."

Unlimited courage suddenly returned to her.

Jerry's enemy was inviting his own annihilation at her hands!

"Oh, Mr. Keating objects, does he?" she snapped back at him with all the vindictiveness of which her little heart was capable.

"It's against the law," explained the law's custodian.

"Against the law to have a dog?" sarcastically protested Joan.

"Dogs, not dog," growled the officer, "You can't have a million of 'em—"

"I'll keep one, then," she retorted. But which one? Every one of them was dear to her—How was she going to choose?

"I'll keep Paregoric," she finally decided.

"Keep what?" he questioned.

"Paregoric—Paregoric—my dog Paregoric—can't I keep something—anything," she defiantly pleaded, as the tears came in a torrent and convulsions of grief began again to shake her little body.

"Keep 'em all, Madam, keep 'em all," Her distress had instantly tamed her persecutor, and he made haste to comfort her, with the whole of his big heart throbbing in his words. "It's nothing to me, you know. I wouldn't hurt you on account of a few extra dogs—not me. It's that guy next door what put me on to you," he apologetically

explained. "Keep 'em all, keep 'em all, keep 'em all."

IV

At six o'clock persistent Tom returned to enlist Jerry's aid.

Joan, robed in her solicitude for Jerry, that transfigured her as no gown could do, showed Tom, what every man eventually comes to learn—that the woman whom he loves is irresistibly most lovable in her hour of patient agony.

Tom Manly, looking upon her, knew that he wanted her more intensely than he wanted anything in life, and in the circumstances which rapidly developed within the next few minutes, he quickly decided that because he wanted her he was justified in taking her, and determined to do so.

"Joan, you are in trouble. I offended you by what I said," he contritely pleaded, in tones so sincerely sympathetic that they would have been enough to start her tears even had she not been on the verge.

The sorrow in her eyes, as she shook her head, touched him deeply. For a moment he stood nervously fingering his hat before her. He wanted to go quickly closer to her. She must have sensed this, for she turned from him, weeping bitterly. He dared not follow her and have Jerry come out and find him doing so. He hurried over to the shut door and opened it, to ask Jerry's help about Joan's trouble. Jerry was not there! Then he literally rushed toward Joan, and grasping her two arms turned her little form round to face him.

"He is so different from Jerry," she thought, "so exactly opposite to him. My tears embarrass Jerry—

almost make him keep away—but they draw Tom to me."

Pressing her gently down into a chair he knelt beside her, holding her hands, and drawing from her the story of Jerry's fight against his feelings outraged by the *Record,* his struggle to complete, before the end of the war, his invention that was to have "multiplied the power of the Press," the contest between his inclinations toward her and his reason, that would not countenance his emotions; the preparation for the final test, the plans for what was to have been the happiest day of their lives, her arrival at the loft, his absence, and finally the note which Jerry had left for him and her:

"Joan and Tom, my dear pals, it has worked out for the best, and nobody wishes you greater happiness than your old chum, Jerry."

While she pitifully sobbed her heartbreaking revelation, his own heart beat faster and faster with the realization that with Jerry's voluntary removal he was honourably free to take what he wanted—what he wanted now more intensely than he could ever want anything, even existence, without her.

"Joan, you told Jerry that I had asked you?"

"Yes, Tom."

His hand closed more tightly upon her own, and he could feel her pulse beating rapidly.

"And you read in last night's paper that I would have gone, as you wished?"

"Yes, Tom, it was magnificent."

Into her empty, aching heart stealthily stole the ardour of his desire for her, and in the guise of sympathy warmed it with gratitude to him and admiration for the persistency of his wooing.

"Joan, are you sure Jerry really loved you?"

"We were just everything to each other." How could he ask such a question, she wondered.

"But would he have left you, if—"

"That proved his love, Tom. He did it for what he thought to be my good. He might have stayed, he might have taken me; but—" she found herself repeating Jerry's own words, " 'proof of love is based on sacrifice alone; some men may think they love without making a sacrifice to prove their love, but that isn't love. It is simply selfishness. It is called—' " she hesitated, "and besides, Tom, Jerry will come back soon."

"Joan, I think I know Jerry pretty well, and I tell you he will never come back," he pleadingly remonstrated.

"Don't say that," she rebuked him. "My instinct tells me he will come back soon. It is just as if the wireless there was speaking into my ears at this instant that he is coming. I can feel it in my heart that he will come back soon."

Re-echoing her words, came the sound of Jerry's footsteps as he reached the top of the stairs.

Bedraggled, tottering, with the heavy hand of death upon his shoulder, he had staggered aimlessly around all day and eventually wandered back to her waiting and aching arms.

The weakness of love?

Might he not have called it that?

In his proper senses would he have admitted that it was love, not selfishness, that effected his return?

Reaching the top of the stairs, and looking through the broken open door, he saw Joan with Tom kneeling beside her, and drew quickly back into the shadow.

"Jerry—Jerry—Jerry!" he heard her call out, as she started for the open door.

He did not answer.

A few steps farther and she would reach out and take him in his weakness into her arms.

Feebly he fought his last battle between his reason and his heart.

He was a failure. Tom was a success.

That gave the solution.

"Jerry is not there, Joan. It is only your imagination," Tom said to her. He led her gently back to her chair.

"It is cruel, Joan, that you should be so unhappy. I know that I can make you happy, and I do so want to make you happy, Joan, Joan—"

To Jerry, listening in the shadow, Tom's words spoke his doom. Tom was right. Tom could make her happy. He himself had failed. It was right that Tom should have his chance. It was plainly his duty to leave Joan to Tom.

As the swaying figure crept noiselessly down the stairs, away from all that was dear to him in the world—away from the scene of his associations with Joan—away forever from Joan herself—out into the darkness, into the chilling and killing rain, there followed him from his beloved wireless the sad strains of the plaintive singer's sobbing voice, chanting the elegy of his buried career:

"For Memory is the only friend
That Grief can call its own."

"No Tom, Jerry will come back to me," Joan replied, not knowing that he had come, and gone, "never to return."

"And if Jerry does not come back, Joan—"

She was silent for a while, quietly weeping.

"Dear Tom, like a brother to me," she had candidly and proudly admitted in the tea-shop. Now she could but admit it to herself again,—but even more feelingly, under the influence of her sympathy for the suffering in his heart, of which she was the occasion. It was not in her to intensify that suffering. She would have preferred to ease it, if she could. But it was impossible to answer him as he desired to be answered. She could not bear to think that she might lose any of his regard for her—that he should be any least bit different to her as a result of any answer that she might give.

She said aloud at last:

"Tom, what are you going to do to-night about supporting the Rector in your paper?"

Determined Tom, clutching at straws, wondered if this was meant as encouragement.

"I honestly do not know, Joan," he frankly replied.

And Joan added:

"Tom, that's my answer, too."

CHAPTER VI

I

TOM MANLY entered the editorial rooms of the *News* with no solution of his many-sided problem.

Joan had been forced to confess to herself, that, under the conditions which bound him, Tom would be compelled either to sacrifice his newspaper interests to stand by the Rector, or else attack the Church and satisfy his masters. She hoped he would not do the latter, and she was sure that he would not do the former.

To Tom, analyzing the problem at his desk, in his careful way, its intricacies were alarming.

He must not offend Joan, which meant that he could not oppose the Church.

He was compelled to safeguard the *News* and satisfy Pogo.

He must beat the *Record* at its own game.

He must prove to Joan that the Church project was unpractical.

And finally he must actually have Joan.

The last phase of the problem was the most important and difficult of all.

Conferring with his associates he said:

"To follow the *Record* now, would be to compliment it." His private version was, "To follow the *Record* now would be to lose Joan."

"Better go with the *Record* than lose our patronage," they retorted.

"We could wait," he replied. "Silence won't hurt anyone involved—"

"Silence won't help," interrupted the advertising mana-

ger. "Silence won't do. Pogo demands an attack on the Church innovation that threatents to ruin his business. Stop the parson's project, or we lose his advertising and the advertising of his friends. They are united against the Church project. It is all wrong, anyhow. The *Record* has beaten us. We must admit it and get in line. Let's take our medicine and get the paper on the press instead of sitting here all night pitying ourselves."

Money was talking, and wise men never contradict what it says.

"Stop the Rector's project!" rang in Tom's ears.

Those were his orders. He had anticipated them before he got them. He had done his best, through Joan to "stop the Rector's project," and if she could not or would not, nobody could. Perhaps Jerry might have done it, but Jerry was out of all consideration now.

"Stop the Rector's project," rang the command, and with all his persevering determination, which never capitulated to any obstacle he answered:

"There must be a way out of this dilemma, and I am either going to find it or make one of my own."

Several hours remained before the paper would go to press at one o'clock in the morning, when the city would be asleep, but when the newspaper office would be most widely awake. Hours after that, the city would awaken, pick up its morning paper, think it was reading unbiased news, and, unless unusually wide awake would, in the language of Larry, "never suspect that it was reading mostly propaganda, hate-stories, advertising sops, publicity puffs, exaggerated reports and distorted facts, skilfully selected by well-tutored reporters and artfully assembled by editors subjected to a variety of influences

ranging from petty vanity to the most prodigious bribery."

With extraordinary celerity, Tom reached the point in his deliberations when he felt fully satisfied with the results of his concentration upon his problem.

Indomitable Tom!

"Hold two half-columns open on page two for the 'Church Movies'," he instructed his assistant, as he reached for the telephone, certain that he had devised a solution which would please Joan, satisfy his associates on the *News*, beat the *Record* by a scoop, show Joan that the Rector's project was unpractical, and incidentally prevent her being lost to him, thus reconciling all the contradictory elements of his problem.

"Operator, call Mr. Pogo's residence."

"Hello, is that Mr. Pogo's home? May I speak to Miss Peggy Pogo?"

"Who is it?"

"The editor of the *News*."

"Oh, then you want to speak to Mr. Victor Pogo?"

"No, Miss Peggy."

At the Pogo home the offspring of the theatre-magnate suddenly and completely lost her studied apathy as she fluttered from the dining table to the telephone, highly excited and flattered by being asked if she would talk to the editor of the *News*. Would she? She certainly would.

"Hello, this is Peggy Pogo. Did you want to speak to my Pop?"

"No Miss; to Miss Peggy. You are Miss Peggy?"

"Yes," Such a delightful new thrill! So different from all the others!

"The *News* begs to suggest that it would be a very nice

thing if Miss Peggy Pogo, daughter of the popular proprietor of Pogo's Picture Palace, would volunteer to act as directress and patroness of the Church Dance on Monday evening, after the movies, and allow the *News* to publish a two-column photo of her in the morning edition, which would carry a story of her intention to make the dance a success?"

Angels of Paradise support Peggy from collapsing! A two-column picture of her in the paper!

"My picture in the Sunday *News,* did you say?—but my Pop is opposed to those movies at the Church—"

"But think of the business and advertising value to be gained from helping the Church project rather than inviting ill-will."

"But we don't want to help."

Tom knew that, without Peggy telling him. That immovable fact was the very basis of his plan. What he replied was:

"Well, you can't stop it, so you might as well get some personal and business advertising out of it. I myself am against the affair, and would like to see it stopped. However, since it is going to be held, you can't do yourself any harm by handling the dance for them. I know you would make good, and our paper thinks there is a good human interest story in the idea of the Church being helped out by a moving-picture man too big to feel envious."

Sophisticated Peggy, accustomed to fathoming the meaning behind men's words, began to glimpse a reason additional to the satisfaction of her vanity for her acceptance of the proposal.

"Wait a moment, and I'll ask Pop," she replied.

"All right. Call me up immediately, so that we can send up for your latest photo, because we must hurry if we are to get you into tomorrow morning's paper."

In a minute Tom's telephone rang, and Peggy informed him:

"Pop says all right, and you can take it from me that I'll not disappoint you—I'll make good."

II

Later in the evening, a voice over Keating's telephone informed the editor of the *Record* that a catastrophe had happened to Jerry Englin.

"Hello, who are you?" Keating enquired: "Hello! Hello! is that the morgue? Hello! is that the hospital? Hello! who is speaking?" The current failed, or the speaker hung up. There was no answer.

Keating, in a fever of excitement, called up the loft, got no answer, sent up a reporter, who found the broken door, rang up Joan at her home, was told by Larry that Joan was asleep and advised to call up Tom Manly, did so and was good naturedly and evasively informed by the editor of the *News* that if he ever happened to have any story about Jerry or about anybody else he could be trusted to keep it to himself, and away from the *Record* until it had first been printed in the *News*.

Having made this "careful" investigation, and with these "abundant facts" and "accurate sources" of information at his disposal, the editor of what Joan termed a "vicious newspaper," deliberately took a whole tenth of a second to decide that he would publish in the morning a "full account" of the "Mysterious Disappearance of Jerry Englin."

III

Larry had his suspicions about *that* Mr. Keating's telephone call, so in the morning he took in the *Record* and the *News* from the vestibule, read their extraordinary contents, and then sagaciously hid them until he could prepare Joan and the Rector for the shock, after which he would produce the papers with their horrible offensiveness diminished.

Larry and the Rector sat facing each other at the breakfast table waiting for the girls. Larry's face betrayed poorly-controlled anger. In his bitterest tones he blurted out at the Rector:

"If I were an advertiser I would just as soon print my advertisement on a piece of garbage and send it in here alongside of the breakfast plates as print it in one of our vile newspapers. It wouldn't be in any filthier company—"

"Larry!" remonstrated the Rector. "Your language—"

"Is not as offensive as the sewers of newspapers that pour their dirty contents over my porridge every morning," Larry hotly continued.

"I am not questioning your arguments, Larry," more mildly protested the Rector, "but your choice of language—"

"Is the only language applicable to the foulest thing that is let live, a newspaper," flung back Larry, whose wrath now was ungovernable. "Fie upon hypocrisy that complacently contemplates filth and then dishonestly disdains to stigmatize it by its proper name."

Joan and Margaret entered, red-eyed from crying during the night over the Rector's fight with Pogo and the *Record,* and Joan's revelations about Jerry.

Larry, looking at the two girls and at the Rector, and more than ever incensed that three such people should be, as he mellifluously put it—"cruelly victimized instead of idolized," swept resentfully onward in his tirade, after carefully lifting his legs out of the danger zone of anticipated kicks from Joan.

"I was remarking to the Rector, before you young ladies came in that no tale is too grotesque to be spread broadcast by our newspapers. And readers accept those tales as they do doctor's pills or clergyman's sermons. They swallow the moral, political, mental and financial poison fed to them, like the gluttons for misery that they morbidly are."

"But Larry, there are good and vicious newspapers, just as there is good and bad in everything else," remonstrated Joan, thinking of Tom's struggle to avoid harming the Rector and offending her.

Larry indulgently grinned at Joan, and raised his legs as high as he could get them, as he replied:

"To me there is nothing more overwhelming than the pathetic tragedy of a common person championing the Press, that has not a genuine spark of human feeling for any individual nor any ideal whatsoever of public welfare. To expect justice and truth from a newsaper is to demand perfume from a—" he was intending to say "skunk" if the Rector's warning cough and vigorous efforts by Joan to reach him with her foot had not stopped him.

Larry's seeming dread of Joan's kicks grew with his malady, and to Joan, who controlled him, and who instinctively regarded all human phenomena through the eyes of the little mother of the tea-shop, his increasing

awe of being kicked by her intimated childishness as the impending phase of his mental decline.

"Larry, what can you be so upset about this morning?" asked Margaret.

"My remarks are most timely," replied Larry, using his pet phrase, "as you shall see when you have read the morning *Record's* scare headlines of outraged indignation over the Rector's moving picture entertainment to-morrow night, and observed its jackal editor tearing to pieces the carcass of his latest victim, Jerry Englin." He spread the paper out before them.

Weeping and comforting one another, the three unoffending victims read and re-read the two articles in the *Record* until each line had seared deeply into their already agonized hearts.

"And the *News,* Larry, what does it publish?" tremulously asked Joan.

"Nothing, not a line about Jerry Englin, and this most astounding announcement that the theatre-magnate's daughter is actually going to help the Rector with his project," replied Larry, handing the *News* to Margaret, who hysterically read the welcome article to her amazed father.

Their astonishment knew no bounds!

Joan smiled proudly through her tears.

"Tom accomplished this for me," she realized, just as she had been compelled to admit when she read about his planned departure for the Front.

The comprehensiveness of what he had done amazed her. Twelve hours ago his problem had been unsolvable, and he had been unable to face either herself, the Rector, his own associates on the *News*, or Pogo, and now, this

morning, he could proudly face everyone of them, to receive not their disapproval, but their appreciation of what he had achieved.

What a beating his scoop administered to the *Record!*

Aloud she said:

"Larry, didn't I tell you that there were both good and vicious newspapers?"

Larry grinned.

IV

The remainder of the meal was, for Joan, a half happy, half sad reverie, about Jerry, and Tom and the contents of the newspapers.

"Tom is wonderful," she remembered that Jerry had said of him; and "why?" she had asked.

"Because he does things—wonderful things—does them at the right time," Jerry had enthusiastically explained, and added, "Tom is unbeatable! Tom gets what he wants!"

"Jerry is splendid," Tom had remarked to her about his pal, "so careful—so scrupulously considerate—so deliberately thoughtful and calculating and reserved."

Confiding their admiration of each other to her—the little mother of the tea-shop.

As though they might have been her two own boys. As such indeed she had almost regarded them, until—until Jerry had come to mean so much more.

So different, she mused, and yet so companionable—loving each other.

Different and yet loving each other—"going together."

Overwhelming memories of the knife and spoon!

Natural enough, though, she soliloquized. People get

along with one another's differences. People rather like one another's differences—they help out—complement—improve. That is why people naturally want to get along with one another. That is why it takes a lot of provoking to prevent their getting along with one another. It is only busybodies that provoke people to exaggerate and dislike one another's differences. She glanced at the newspapers, as she thought about this, particularly at the vicious one, and remembered the cartoon. How childish, she observed. Childish grown-ups making faces at one another. Childish grown-ups crying for their own way. Childish newspapers mischievously prodding them on, trying to make them fuss and quarrel, instead of teaching them to control their dislike of other people's ways and have the spirit to understand and get along with one another—to like one another—just as Jerry and Tom felt the need of each other—liked each other—undoubtedly helped each other—though as different as night and day.

Dashing, venturesome, aggressive Tom. Retiring, conservative, considerate Jerry.

Which would the average woman prefer? she wondered. Which would a young woman prefer?

She caressingly brooded over them—her own—one lost to her, one loving her still—and compared them.

Tom could acquire some of Jerry's qualities and be the better for it, she speculated—still hopelessly loving Jerry.

Jerry could have acquired some of Tom's qualities and been even more lovable, too, perhaps.

So with all people who mix and are different, she speculated. That is the tremendous advantage of mixing—

to blend—to assimilate—to improve—not to fuss and fight—nor keep on childishly crying for their own ways.

Too much of one's own way is not good for any one, her mother's instinct reminded her. Overmuch of anything is a blight.

Tom, with all his resourcefulness and enterprise and determination plus a measure of Jerry's conscientious reserve! What an irresistible character that would be!

Jerry, with all his scrupulous consideration for others, and his gentle and retiring ways—with an added dash of Tom's magnetic aggressiveness—slow, sure, considerate, but decisively quick on occasion! Oh—if Jerry had but only been that way once—at the corner!

Could Tom ever become retiring and reserved—could he? she wondered. It did not seem probable.

Could Jerry ever have been aggressive? Impossible! Audacious Jerry! Unthinkable!

The telephone-bell in the hall interrupted Joan's reverie.

"Miss Peggy Pogo would like to speak to the Rector," announced Larry.

The Rector answered the telephone and returned to the breakfast table with sparkling eyes.

"It is true," he joyfully confided. "Miss Pogo is actually going to help us. And there is no question about her meaning it. She has put her whole heart into it. She personally guarantees a success. She keeps assuring me that she 'will make good.' "

CHAPTER VII

I

THE bells of Trinity Church pealed forth on Monday evening at six o'clock, when Newspaper Row was emptying itself of its weary throng, and vied successfully with Pogo's electric sign in drawing patronage.

"Ding dong dong; ding dong dong!"

Larry tugged at the ropes with childish glee.

"Ding dong dong; ding dong dong!"

Peal upon peal, chiming, booming—their rumbling, drumming, clattering, clanking voices crashed through the air. Hundreds of doves frightened from the belfry flew circling around the heads of the crowds in the streets who halted in their rush and stood looking upward in amazement. Most of them had never heard Trinity Church bells before. The bells had not been rung for years.

"Ting a ling, ting a ling," sounded the telephone bell in the sacristy of the Church.

Larry could not both haul away at the ropes and answer the telephone.

"Ding dong dong; ding dong dong," clamoured the belfry bells.

"Ting a ling, ting a ling," tinkled the telephone.

"Maybe that's the Rector," thought Larry, "I had better answer."

"Hello?" he enquiringly spoke into the mouthpiece.

"Larry!" answered the Rector's excited voice. "Don't you know it is against the law to ring the Church bells? Don't you remember that the City Council decided they disturbed people and should not be rung?"

"Pogo's vulgar sign disturbs me, too," Larry shouted back at the Rector.

"That's not the point, Larry. The law is the law and must be obeyed. Stop ringing the bells at once," commanded the Rector.

"But we are beyond the law, now. We have the backing of the *News*. We stand in with the bosses. Nobody dares interfere with us now—"

"Larry, it is you who are doing the interfering. You are interfering with my efforts, and I want you to obey me," insisted the Rector.

"Very well, sir. The persecutions of the last few days have been making me worse, sir. I'll not ring the bells," replied poor Larry, as he hung up the receiver, yielding as usual to the Rector's command.

"Ting a ling, ting a ling," demanded the telephone again.

"Hello?" enquired Larry.

"Can I reserve box seats for the show?" piped a woman's shrill voice.

"No Ma'am, they're all free—yes Ma'am, you come along and I'll take care of you," he answered, as he left the receiver off the hook, remembering that to be the practice of popular show-houses wishing to make callers believe they were not interested in telephone calls, having so many people already trying to get seats.

"It will make them most anxious to come," Larry said to himself, but, as he looked out of the window at the crowd around the Church, he realized that he was not going to be able to "take care" of the lady who telephoned, and that there was no further need of ringing the bells.

The publicity supplied to the Church's free cinema-show by the fight between the *Record* and the *News* jammed Newspaper Row with an army of curious moving-picture patrons who had been reinforced by a multitude that had gathered for the second celebration of the Armistice, just confirmed. Obviously a free-for-all fight for admission was coming.

The childlike eyes of light-headed Larry beamed with happiness.

It was six-thirty. The moving-pictures were scheduled to commence at seven and end at nine. After that, at nine, was to come the dance in the basement of the Church.

"I could open the doors and take care of about a hundredth part of that crowd," thought Larry, "but then the others would go home. It's better advertising to keep them all waiting out there as long as I can. Then more people will tack on to the edge of that mob and try to jimmy their way through it. That's the way the theatres do it," he remembered. "Keep them waiting outside, with the house empty, until the last minute. Use them as advertisements to make passers-by believe that there is a tremendously successful show inside. I'll just do that, and hope they don't shove the Church out of Newspaper Row in the meantime, or try to break in by way of the steeple."

II

For fifteen minutes the Rector had been trying to dig a way through the throng for himself and for Margaret and Joan. Finally he was recognized.

"Make way for the Rector," bawled a burly champion

of the privilege of the pastor to be given a clear right of way into his own Church. In the uproar nobody heard the fellow, except his nearest neighbour. For the twentieth time the Rector with Margaret and Joan clinging to him, found themselves shunted back up North Street. The Church, a block away, might just as well have been in Palestine so far as his hope of getting into it was concerned. He stood, with the girls, speculating on a plan of attack.

"Honk-screech-shriek-honk-honk!" bellowed the powerful horn of Peggy Pogo's automobile, rounding the corner on its way with her and her party of friends to the Church.

"Hello there," shouted Peggy to the Rector and the girls, "aren't you going to the movies at the Church?" She stopped her car beside the disconsolate trio.

"They won't let us through," mournfully vouchsafed the Rector.

"They won't *let* you," scornfully echoed Peggy. "Well, we'll show 'em. Hop in here, you three. Make room for 'em, girls. Trixie, you just let the Rector sit in your lap for a minute. Say, believe me, don't wait for people to give you what you want. Take it away from 'em, like this."

She backed her car for a block to get a good speeding start. Scorching on the return she reached the edge of the crowd going at forty miles an hour.

"Honk, whine, honk, yell, honk, bellow, honk, howl," warned the horn.

"Crack, crack, crack, crack, crack, crack," threatened the "cut-out."

Stampeding sidewise like terrorized cattle, crushing

each other recklessly the Rector's prodigiously swollen congregation opened up a groove for Peggy's bullet, which tore through it and stopped abruptly in front of the Church.

"There's a pastor for you," commented the young man who opened the door of the car, "delivered direct to the door of his Church by a bodyguard of queens as beautiful as any on the screen," he added, as he helped the Rector out of Trixie's lap.

III

Standing in the vestibule of his Church to greet his parishioners, the Rector gave Larry the order to open the doors. In an instant the human battering-ram had hammered him and the sexton up against the chancel rail, and in thirty-four seconds the pews, gallery, aisles and window sills were jammed.

Never before had people gone to Church in such a hurry.

The only two features of their entrance on this occasion that resembled their entrance on normal occasions were the preference for rear seats, and their silence. Movies methodically muffle and muzzle the multitudes that are to be mesmerized by them, by curt curtain comments on the strict necessity of keeping quiet, so that if you do not like a picture, or resent its insinuations, you hardly dare say so to yourself, much less mention it to your neighbour. Whether the majority of these people had ever been to Church before or not, their moving-picture experience taught them to be so quiet that every word of the earnest Rector's devout prayer was heard by each one present.

"Omniscient Father, through whose Divine Son we ignorant ones of earth have been taught by parables, we remember that the Master was wont to appeal to our ignorant hearts both through our blinded eyes and through our deafened ears. We remember that He not only spoke to our ears about the mustard seed, but that He pointed it out by the roadside to our eyes.

"Your incompetent servant, responsible to you for the morals of this parish, having tried, with lessening results, to carry Your commandments to the hearts of his parishioners solely through their ears, by word of mouth, attempts to-night most humbly to imitate Your Divine Son's method of teaching by appealing to the hearts of those gathered here, through their eyes as well as through their ears, and earnestly begs Your blessing upon this endeavour.

"A picture of life, as it is unfortunately lived, containing much that is good and much that is bad, will be reflected above Your altar, to make its ocular appeal for the good, and against the bad, to the hearts of this congregation. When the moving-picture has been completed, the members of the parish will be requested to comment upon both the good and the bad. In this way, Your weak servant hopes to-night to reach the hearts of his flock with Your Divine message, after the manner used by Your Divine Son in His parables, which were pictures of actual life like that to be exhibited here to-night.

"Kind Father, we recognize that our effort has the semblance of a radical innovation; but so too was it a radical innovation when Your Divine Son flogged the money-changers who encroached upon the Temple, and

with Your Divine assistance we hope to make our effort redound to Your greater honour and glory. Amen."

The Rector's earnestness, and the scope of his project, thrilled and frightened those of the moving-picture theatre-owners who had managed to get in. They found themselves confronted by a man and a movement determined to diminish, if not ruin, their business.

One of the ushers of the Church had cleared a way to the organ for the lady organist. The Rector nodded to her that he was ready for the music for the picture. She was his talented ally in all his endeavours. In this particular instance the rugged strength of the usher was invaluable in handling the crowd; a less sturdy man could not possibly have controlled the people. He was one of the Church's Sunday School class of swarthy South Sea Island proselytes.

Before the Rector's touching prayer, a man who had got in with a basket, one of the well-known vendors in Newspaper Row, was intending to ask Larry's permission "to sell chocolates to the audience." Before the minister's prayer ended he had sensed the sacred seriousness of the occasion, and was selling his product to the crowd outside that waited patiently in the hope of a second showing of the picture at nine o'clock.

Never had the Church looked so attractive to its occupants. It was going to be a popular place after this. Everyone present agreed upon that. The *Record* could fight the project as much as it pleased, but so much the worse for the *Record.*

IV

Larry turned out the lights, the organist began to

play her hymn, and a flood of light illumined the screen.

The introductory section of film repeated in bulletin form the substance of the Rector's plan to analyze the "Feature-picture," after it had been shown. Following the "Feature-picture" would be exhibited a "Comedy" to emphasize the sunshine of life. And at nine o'clock, after the picture, in the Church basement, "Miss Peggy Pogo would entertain with a dance." Peggy's "Pop" had graciously supplied this last section of film, with Peggy's face on it.

Larry, watching the picture with increasing disgust, called it "a typical specimen of the screen-garbage dished up under the conviction that human beings have the appetites of vultures." Talking about it afterwards, he said:

"To make a moving-picture, take a tiny heroine, who is a wayward daughter, introduce her to a millionaire, who souses her with cocktails in a beautiful den, bring in Convict Bill to the rescue, and be sure to work it out to a happy ending."

As the various scenes in the picture shifted about on the screen, the organist skilfully displayed her versatility by harmonizing the action of the drama with popular melodies sufficiently well known to the congregation to produce in their hearts the particular emotion invited by the picture.

This medley of airs, starting from the hymn, included strains from "Naughty, naughty Nellie," "Kiss me kid and kill me," "Tell it to Bill," "We should worry," "Where do we go from here?" and other inspired stanzas not found in the hymn book, although well known to the beautiful organist, as the Rector realized

in great surprise, while peering through the darkness for Larry, meaning to send him with a message that a "more dignified selection of music might be more in keeping with the atmosphere of the Church." But Larry did not appear.

V

"Before the lighter phase of life is reflected upon the screen, we will first analyze this serious picture which we have just seen," announced the Rector.

"We will try to study it together. We will pick out the good and also the bad. Let us begin with the bad and end with the good, so that our last thoughts may be pleasant ones. Will someone in the congregation please stand up and fearlessly pick out what to him or her seemed bad in the picture?"

Nobody rose. Nobody spoke. It is possible that nobody even did any thinking. But everybody was intently listening. And all stared vacantly, like sheep.

"You must not be afraid," said the Rector encouragingly. "You must not be afraid to think for yourselves and stand up for your convictions. Modesty is not inconsistent with a manly utterance of your opinions. To be always passive is to be weak. Now then let us have several of you bid for the opportunity to speak first. Don't mind me. This is a family discussion. Just talk and act naturally, as if I were not even present, and as if you were chatting among yourselves."

He was trying very hard to elicit their views, and his efforts were generously rewarded.

A dozen people stood up in different parts of the Church.

"There weren't enough 'close-ups,'" ventured one.

"There were too many 'fade-outs'," quickly added a young blond.

"The leading man's make-up was too thin," piped another woman.

"The leading lady doesn't know how to use a lip-stick," retorted a man.

"The scenario sequence is loose," insisted a literary spinster.

"The hero and heroine didn't iris out in a kiss," pouted a twelve year old miss.

"Who's Iris?" enquired a fellow in a window.

"Too short for a five-reeler. Ought 'a been a two-reeler," sang out a chap whose clothes suggested stage experience.

"If the muts who made that picture, or thought they made it, had had a wiser film-cutter, and an experienced camera man, and up-to-date sets, and better lighting, they could have got by, but—"

This aggressive film agent was promptly interrupted by a competing film agent, who bawled:

"It was absolutely rotten. Now I have a picture that I'd like to have you—"

"The operator in the balcony ran it too fast," broke in the fellow in the window who wanted to meet "Iris."

The operator leaned over the balcony, leered in the direction of the window and roared:

"You ain't got experience enough to know that a film runs itself. It was under-cranked by the amateur who took it, that's what's wrong with it."

Historically, this was probably the first time that movie patrons had enjoyed the opportunity of talking back at a

picture. They took full advantage of the opportunity. In genuine "family" style they literally tore it to pieces. With it went the entire moving-picture industry. Pictures were condemned to eternal obloquy. Everything and everybody connected with the screen was hacked and smashed and flattened contemptuously.

"And yet," commented Larry, "the barbarians want more of the same kind of films."

"Shoot on the comedy," drawled a weary voice.

Larry thought that was a "timely" suggestion and did so.

VI

The Rector was hopelessly realizing, more keenly than ever, what a gulf separated him from his flock. To bridge it meant undoing the work of years of demoralizing propaganda, which had skilfully and expensively substituted conventions for morals, imitation for individuality. His parishioners were puppets pulled by strings, in the hands of masters powerful enough to make them all move alike, talk alike and even think alike. Their behaviour was as farcical as a Punch and Judy show. And he had been presumptuously crediting them with intelligence. He began to wonder how to cure their depraved minds. His thoughts wandered away from the Comedy picture flickering over the screen. He pondered over such concepts as mental aberration, hallucination, fanaticism, delusion, infatuation, hysteria. In place of the picture on the screen, he began dimly to see a picture of an immense asylum, built just like his Church, with its chattering inmates, and Larry bossing them around. Suddenly a man laughed loudly. It was a hoarse guffaw.

"Somebody in one of the wards," thought the Rector, in his abstraction.

The laughter began again.

"What's so funny?" enquired a voice.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha," replied the laugher, unrestrainedly. "I'm laughin' at 'em *tryin'* to be funny, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Cackling bursts of laughter from everybody shook the building, and the film ended.

"They're mad!" exclaimed the Rector. "My people are mad!"

"Dance in the basement," flashed a slide on the screen, with Peggy Pogo's face adorning it.

The childlike eyes of crack-brained Larry darkened with disgust.

CHAPTER VIII

I

PEGGY "made good" with the dance.

Promptly at nine o'clock automobiles began to arrive at the basement door of the Church, driven by selected male members of Peggy's set, to each of whom had been issued special tickets of admission. To these gentlemen had been left the privilege of bringing their own lady guests.

These were recruited in various ways. Local stages contributed some, manicure-shops were represented, Pogo's usherettes gladly accepted, cloak-room brigandesses condescended, some were steady-regulars of their escorts, and others were the kind that stand at street-car stations at nine in the evening, but never take a car until one with rubber tyres picks them up.

These favoured participants were permitted to enter ahead of the less experienced, and were depended upon to show the others just how a successful up-to-date dance is conducted.

II

Larry leered at the females of all ages and sizes, as they seethed and surged in through the entrance, struggling and pushing and shoving to reach a room off the main floor labelled "Ladies' Cloakroom." Whenever the door of that room opened, he observed a white mist, like a cloud, escape from it, and a very delightful aroma, sweet-smelling and heavy, began to pervade the atmosphere.

Peggy joined the throng crowding inside this room,

and pushed and shoved with the best. They trod on her toes and she trod on theirs. She seemed to care nothing for their angry glances and sarcastic tongues.

As she struggled to penetrate the jostling mass of femininity, the air was suddenly torn by a violent sound, loud and vibrating. Near her a girl who was checking her corsets exclaimed:

"There goes the orchestra."

Another who had successfully pigeon-holed what Larry termed her "hug-hindering" stays, remarked:

"I am all ready for that one-step," and disappeared.

"There won't be any one-step until I get out there and lead the opening march," decisively explained Peggy to the others, as she made a final dive through the group, opened her vanity-bag, and attacked her nose.

She had succeeded in reaching the mirror.

Larry, looking inward past the opening door, remarked:

"The charge of the Powder Brigade."

III

Outside the Church, looking through the basement windows, those who could not get inside fought to satisfy their dazzled eyes with a splendour that was fascinating.

The hall had been decorated lavishly. The pillars were wreathed with ribbons. Streamers hung from the ceiling. The light of hundreds of bulbs was softly-subdued by vari-coloured silken shades fashioned to represent birds, animals and flowers. The rays were red and blue, orange and violet. On the walls hung pictures of the reigning screen-beauties, and the dance cards bore, in gilded letters the motto:

"It is sweet to be desired."

On the dance programme the first one-step was set down to the tune of "Give Me Thy Lips," the first waltz was "There is Nothing in the World but Love," and so on for the rest.

In an instant after Peggy had given the signal for the opening dance the hall was seething, with the faces of the dancers for the most part sickly pale, but here and there among the Caucasians spectators was the dark face of one of the Church's South Sea Island savages in the process of being "civilized."

The city's future captains of industry, exclusively occupied for the present with their petting parties, outside of which they enjoyed quite effortless lives, afforded Larry glimpses of the important contents of their valuable minds, through the snatches of conversation that were audible as they whirled their mentally stimulating partners past him.

" . . . . so Dot and Bert had broken off . . . . "

" . . . . her Dad cut her allowance . . . . "

" . . . . likes her cigarettes better . . . . "

" . . . . swellest place for a . . . . "

" . . . . too darned slow to suit me . . . . "

"Too darned bad you're celebrating the Armistice tonight before getting acquainted with some swifter things 'at the Front,'" thought Larry.

He didn't know which he despised most, those young "sharks" in quest of their human prey, or the "ripples" among which they splashed around. Being male, he was greatly engrossed by the latter.

They were, all of them, more or less perfect duplicates of Peggy. What they wore seemed to Larry to be meant

to attract attention rather than to cover their bodies. They stepped along in a thrilling state of semi-nudity.

For months Larry had been measuring the upward retreat of the sleeves worn by them, as well as the downward retreat of their blouses. When it was the style to wear dresses eight inches from the ground he noted the "ripples" put theirs at twelve. When styles followed the "ripples" to sixteen they put theirs to the knee, regardless of how far the knees were from the ground. When normal women wore long hair they bobbed theirs. It looked as if they would now have to shave in order to get a real effect.

Their individual characters were X-rayed by Larry as they revealed them through their faces. He saw the thin lips of curiosity, weakness and ill-temper; the pale cheeks of the conspirator; the small nose of the back-biter; the vacillating eyes of the coquette.

The pouting lips and dimples and slightly celestial nose of Mildred, tapering somewhat at the tip, told him she was a sorceress, but he had to admit that her pout was irresistible, and that there was charm in her dimples.

The hazel eyes of Beatrice, and her profusion of chestnut hair, convinced him that she was nine-tenths emotional imagination and one-tenth intelligence, but as she passed him and scorchingly remarked to her partner, "You *are* dense!" he became painfully aware of his own inferior mental equipment.

Adelia, with fair hair and forget-me-not eyes, compliant and clinging, fluffy and frilly, exhibited a small mouth, with dimples at the corners, and evidenced to him a doll-like vapid mind. But he overheard a fellow remark of her:

"She is 101 per cent feminity and a first-class chum."

One particular snatch of psychological chit-chat especially interested Larry.

"It's nature," excusingly observed a scarlet lady.

"Better to be natural than hypocritical," comforted her companion.

"Prudes who criticize betray thereby their secret liking," added Amoretta, with elaborate finality.

Larry could scarcely believe his eyes as he scrutinized the woman and recognized a notoriety of Newspaper Row, golden haired, sweetly pretty, and, though divorced from two husbands, possessing the face and look of a virgin, one of the vilest women on earth, celebrated for her fabulous debaucheries. But closer observation of the crowd revealed that still other well-known ladies of unsatisfied emotions had similarly contributed their beautiful forms as an ornament to the occasion.

Amoretta's partner was one of those tall, distinguished, good-looking old egg-heads, so called because of the "high forehead running through from the face to the back of the neck, with hair on both sides of it." Larry saw him desert her for one of the youngest ripples, whose best boast at the end of the season, he calculated, would be that she could hang up a bigger row of baldheads than anyone in her set.

Larry's amazement suddenly turned into partial paralysis, as the Rector's dusky South Sea Island usher and the organist fox-trotted into view. Annette's form, at once slender and full, was crushed against Woolooloo's body, her arms and limbs entwined by his own. Larry watched him looking downward at her as if he wished to gorge himself with the sight of her, burning her eyes

with his as she looked up at him with desire. And as Larry stared, the dance momentarily stopped, and Woolooloo's glance slipped from Annette's face to her neck and bare arms, fondling her shapely outlines—openly devouring her with his answering desire.

Joan and Margaret hurried away, instinctively fearful of defiling their eyes with the sight of one of the popular shameful orgies of the times.

IV

Tom Manly wedged his way into the hall, with the help of a press-badge, took one look, remarked to himself, "Peggy has made good," and went away.

Wilfrid Keating entered a few minutes later, with Victor Pogo accompanying him, and after they had both watched for a few minutes, Pogo observed:

"Peggy made good, all right, maybe I didn't fully understand her. Deep girl! Wise girl! For her 'Pop'!"

Keating made no reply.

The Rector approached the editor of the *Record*, restraining himself with difficulty, and remonstrated:

"Your paper could stop this sort of thing. Why don't you? Why don't you ever stop anything immoral? We couldn't have such an exhibition here as this unless it were conventional—the usual sort of thing—promoted by you and your advertisers. You are killing our nation's faith by countenancing the moral destruction of our youth. Youth no longer has faith in anything. You are killing the nation itself!" He was furious.

Keating made no reply.

The Rector, fearful that he might lose control and strike the editor, hurried upstairs into the Church, to

pray and prepare a "never to be forgotten" sermon to the revellers on the spot, in the very midst of their carousal.

"Forgiving Father," he prayed, "I confess a miserable failure of my efforts this evening to make Your Church more acceptable and helpful to the souls entrusted to me, and I humbly ask for help.

"The moving-pictures have shown my people to be mentally depraved. The social gathering downstairs has shown me, as I never comprehended it before, the depths of their moral degradation. I fear that their reason has been undermined. Your helping gift to them of their conscience has been so inoculated with poison that their instinct has become confounded with sensation. The soul within them has been killed. It is a terrifying admission to make, O God, but our people are headed for the pit of impotent and inferior races. They do not realize that the nation is perishing.

"Good God, help me to save my people."

He buried his face in his hands and tried to think what he should say to them.

V

Downstairs Peggy had announced a prize to be presented to the couple who danced best.

The winning couple would be selected from the entire gathering, and be allowed the opportunity of giving an exhibition dance, after which a suitable prize would be awarded to them.

Peggy encouragingly added that the prize was a particularly suitable one, because she had "picked it out herself," and urged all to "do their best," which Larry,

listening to her, interpreted to mean "do their dirtiest."

The lights were dimmed, and atomizers sprayed an intoxicating perfume over the dancers to exhilirate them, and excite their blood, already on fire. Cheek to cheek, with mist covered eyes, Woolooloo and Annette danced, and won.

The savage spirit in Woolooloo, to which physical beauty spoke with more eloquence than anything else on earth, lit up his dark eyes with such a splendour of satisfaction as only the passionate enjoyment of his heart's desire could provoke, and the feelings of the women present reacted warmly to his barbaric influence upon them, as they applauded him loudly and looked at him longingly, which provoked Larry into angrily remarking:

"The race is retrograding to the level of the missing link."

VI

As Woolooloo and Annette began their exhibition dance, before receiving Peggy's prize, intense delight was reflected upon several hundred faces, not only nearing stupidity, Larry thought, but reaching it utterly.

The music for the dance began with a disordered and wild outburst of dissolute plaints. Woolooloo passionately drew Annette nearer to him in a series of caresses increasingly accentuated and provoked by the pulsating strains of the orchestra, and began to astound her with endearing words flung from the depths of his soul, crudely resonant as the music and as thrilling as wine. Annette's pulse beat oppressively in her hands and temples. Then the music alluringly changed. Dulcet, deeptoned melodies, bewitchingly refreshing, softened

the effect upon her of his words. But again the feeling seized her that she was flying into some abyss. Down, down, she was sinking, perishing! Pleadingly, enticingly, the soft and mellow call of the flute quieted her fears. Woolooloo's breath began to blow around her nearer and nearer, as he lifted her along. She began to resist him. She felt her blood boiling and a remnant of indignation flared up in her soul. But the fascinating harmonies of a sweet voiced violin captivated her senses and subdued her. Her power of resistance deserted her more and more. Something cajolingly told her it was too late; that one who had been so embraced, whose heart had beaten as hers was beating, through whose frame such tremors had passed, was lost beyond recovery. Woolooloo and the music were awakening something within her from a sleep. It wanted to be awakened. She hesitated to have it aroused. Some new kind of rapture was enfolding her, in which acute enjoyment and delight were mingled with intense anxiety and fear. The straight and strange gaze which she leveled at Woolooloo revealed alike her trepidation and delight. The heart-beats in her pulse and temples and breast raced with her breathing, and her mouth opened partly in wonder and partly for relief. Gradually the dominating roll of the drum, with its exciting vibrations and the insinuating suspensions of its teasingly slow and measured beats, accomplished her submission to the movements and fondling to which Woolooloo skilfully subjected her. The luxuriously intoxicating intonations of the cello and the entrancing modulations of the bass viol so harmoniously accompanied the strange words she was hearing from his lips for the first time, that she eventually ceased to wish, from

any motive, moral or otherwise, to miss one sound of his voice or one movement of his dance. Popularized selections of savage discord riotously disorganized her faculties. Fiery and furious trumpet-calls, and clarionets and bugles, producing creeps and perturbation, thrills and exultation, deafened her ears to the voice of conscience. Quivering guitars, tingling mandolins, tantalizing tom-toms, bells and gongs and cymbals, mercilessly tormenting, torturing and subjugating, drove her wildly on to her complete capitulation, smothering her scruples with her consciousness that the onlookers of her sex gave facial evidence of vicariously feeling the same thrilling sensations that she experienced—"hypocrites," Larry appraised them, "who complacently contemplate but dishonestly disdain to stigmatize filth by its right name." At moments Annette disconcertedly dropped her eyes; then again she raised them bravely to Woolooloo, as if she wanted to say, "let us go on, and on." She felt the heat that issued from him. A kind of sweet weakness, faintness and forgetfulness seized her.

And her submission to him began to act on Woolooloo also. Her beauty was intoxicating his senses and he was devouring her. His nostrils dilated. The throbbing of his heart grew wilder. His breathing became shorter. His mind became dazed. He felt a fire in his veins which he did not try to extinguish. Desire cut restraint out of his will. The motions of his limbs began to express what the popular dancer of the day endeavours to depict in his dancing as vividly as he can. It was less a dance than a carnal love scene, all but complete, voluptuously indicating with wildest license the paroxysms of connubial association, bewitching, bacchic!

In vain Annette turned away her face to escape his impending kisses. Her breast heaving in full sight of his eyes tempted him beyond all remnants of self-control. Bending her fiercely backward and downward beneath him, he began, panting, to press his dark mouth upon hers deathly pale—his lewd lips reddened her neck—she struggled in his arms—he covered her with furious kisses.

The child-like eyes of lunatic Larry flashed his quick conception of a "timely" idea. He would award a prize of his own.

"Nothing could be more 'suitable' as a prize for them," he hurriedly decided, as he darted away and instantly reappeared to present it to them himself.

Yes, he was sure, it was "timely" and fitting, and something they needed right away, and might just as well have at once for comfort's sake. It was rather small, he realized, being intended only for himself, but, under the circumstances, it would accommodate the two of them.

So, to the feigned and extravagantly exaggerated embarrassment of the enraptured onlookers, who were ecstatically applauding Woolooloo and Annette, he opened up and placed before them on the floor the bed that Peggy Pogo had "personally selected" and given him.

Keating led the stampede out of the hall, and flew to the office of the *Record*.

CHAPTER IX

I

LARRY lied to the Rector and Margaret and Joan next morning at their silent breakfast, when he gave them the Morning *News* containing nothing about the previous night's happenings at the Church, and told them the *Record* had not been delivered. The fact was that he was hiding it until after Joan and Margaret should have departed, and would then put it in the Rector's study for him to read alone.

The first thing that both Margaret and Joan did, separately, after parting at the corner, was to buy a copy of the *Record.* Margaret took her copy to the book shop where she was hopelessly carrying on her losing fight for the business, and Joan took her copy to the loft where she used to read the morning papers and have breakfast with Jerry.

The *Record's* conspicuous article on the Rector's "Shapely Limb Contest" shocked and challenged her to an extent that editor Keating had not calculated upon.

"This very morning, at the very start of their day, thousands of young girls are being affected, whether they know it or not, by the tone of this article," she reminded herself. "Subconsciously, their moral plane must sink towards the level of what their minds are fed on. It is wicked! and somehow I am going to get it stopped!"

She put her foot down on it—the little mother of the tea-shop—it must stop!

She did not know how—but it must stop!

The initial emotion of her life reasserting itself—the propensity to do what her mother would have done—to

do what all mothers would do—stop it—protect their own.

The only and absorbing ambition she ever experienced —"to be like her mother"—until Jerry came. Likely to be her absorbing aspiration once again, now that Jerry had gone. Something had to take his place. Something must at once be an outlet for all the hurting, pent-up emotion of her heart. Not Tom—she felt sure—except to mother him—to help him. Not anybody any more, she feared—except just to mother them—and help them.

The little mother of the tea-shop—on guard again.

II

The first important event at the loft, on this Tuesday morning following the dance, was the disbanding of Joan's army to appease the police.

All her forces were refused admission, with the exception of Paregoric, who was permitted to come in and stay in all the morning. The homely fatness and towzled shagginess of the mongrel influenced Joan in her decision that the other, better-looking dogs stood more chance of finding someone to love them.

But the others must have sensitively resented the selection of one of their species so obviously inferior to themselves, for they set up a protest of howls outside the door; Paregoric vindictively answering from within, secure in the protection of the dividing door; but when Joan opened it to stamp her foot at the noisy gang the favourite judiciously took refuge behind her, until the army was in full flight down the stairs, when it was quite safe to take a bold stand at the top of the staircase, and bark derision into the ears of the retreating company.

The second important event was the decision made by Joan towards the end of the first day's attempt to carry out Jerry's unstarted test, to call on Keating, and speak her mind to him—administer his needed spanking!

There were times during the day when she could have shouted at him in anger through the wall that separated his editorial rooms from the loft, had he been there, but she knew he would not arrive before six o'clock. The long wait cooled her indignation and disposed her to use with the editor of the *Record* the best weapon in a woman's armoury—petition. Remembering her appeal to Tom Manly, and recalling that his paper had been subsequently withheld from attacking the Rector, she felt confident of being able to plead with Keating with equal success.

Passing for a moment into the crowd of weary girls, buying their evening portion of moral-poison from the news-boys, her heart went out to them with all the mother-love of which it was capable. With her solicitude about their subjection to their conventional bondage overmastering her she entered the *Record* building determined to protect them from what they were palpably unable or unwilling to avoid themselves.

III

Wilfrid Keating could have told Joan what was on her mind before she revealed it, so he began to listen to her while dividing his attention between her and numerous directions to assistants, telephone calls, and pencilled memoranda, rising occasionally to leave the room, apparently giving his interest to a hundred things more important than herself, and altogether treating her with

about as much consideration as he might have given to a fly that bothered him, suggesting that, like the fly, she would eventually go away.

"I have never been in an editor's room before," Joan began, discreetly.

"Send the head proof-reader up here," she heard him speak into a telephone.

He was busy, she decided. He was too busy to ask her to sit down.

She would wait.

He was making notes on sheets of paper. Outside the open door of his office another man was making similar notes on similar sheets of paper, seated at the centre of a half-circle table. On either side of him, at the same table, sat other men, making the same kind of notes on the same kind of paper. All the men at this odd-shaped table seemed to be passing their little sheets of paper to the man in the centre. Sometimes he would hand them back: occasionally a boy would go back and forth between him and Keating carrying the little squares of paper. Frequently the man at the centre of the circular table would put some of the sheets into a pneumatic tube in front of him and they would disappear. All round the room were unpretentious desks which Joan presumed were for the use of the reporters, because young men were coming, as she waited, with similar sheets of paper which they took from their pockets and worked on at these desks. Some of the young men kept their hats on as they wrote, all of them smoked incessantly, and there was no audible conversation in the room. The muffled "tick-tick" of telegraph instruments in an adjoining room was the only sound that could be heard. Green shades

softened the glare of the electric lights. Joan's thoughts went back to study days at college. She fancied that she might be watching a studious group of her schoolmates in a study-hall, preparing tomorrow's tasks, instead of observing one of the city's powerful thought-machines creating for the citizens their morning's supply of ideas.

The proof-reader sent for by Keating came and went. Still Joan stood, unnoticed. Finally she sat down at her own instigation. Keating got up and left the room. Before she could wonder where he had gone he returned. She abruptly accosted him. He was getting on her nerves. She forgot her plan to plead instead of to condemn.

"Your paper printed nothing this morning but inventions about the Church Dance last night," she feebly ventured.

"How do you know? You were not there," Keating replied, without looking at her.

"But you have no right to attack the Rector," she retorted.

"There's a shot for you," she comforted herself. "I dare dispute your rights."

Keating took no notice of her.

"Your phrasing was calculated to make him odious," she added.

Ye gods! she was criticizing a big newspaper editor's English!

Keating kept on writing.

"You annihilated him overnight," she asserted, gathering force with every blow.

Verily the gods are merciful. She had not yet been thrown out.

Keating kept on writing.

"You suppressed the truth and distorted the facts."

Crack! Crack! Crack! came her charges like machine-gun bullets.

"You were flippant and you were mocking."

"Is it impossible to insult the man," she wondered?

"And you pretend to all the virtues."

That ought to rile him.

But Keating kept on writing.

"And you presume to pick out who's who and who isn't."

Somewhere outside a street organ began to play, "It's coming to you."

"Your paper blasts the best hopes of mankind, and perpetuates torment instead of happiness for thousands."

Still no response from Keating.

"You are responsible for the only ideas that your readers possess."

Keating answered the telephone.

"Will you apologize to the Rector?"

Ladies and Gentlemen, step this way for Death Valley!

"Of course not. You never apologize."

She answered it for him, with fine scorn.

"Do you call that 'serving the public'?" she continued.

Lead, Kindly Light!

"I call it hoodwinking the public."

Keating stared at her.

The little mother—militant!

In her eyes he saw that veiled deep glow, that pathetic hurt dignity, that unsubdued and unsubduable spirit that burns and smoulders in the eye of a caged eagle, rousing in humans self-scorn by its mute reproach.

She thought his manner softened as he looked at her.

"Nobody denies your paper its profits, Mr. Keating," she continued.

She hoped he would say something to that, but he returned to his writing.

"Anybody can write up a lot of sensationalism," she went on. "It doesn't require any extraordinary brain-power to do that. For proof that it is easy to do, just see how many newspaper editors in the country are doing it daily. To write the truth can't be easy, otherwise it would be more common. Isn't it therefore worth trying?"

He surprised her by answering her. What he said seemed to echo what another editor, Tom Manly, had said to her.

"What you have in mind is no copy for a news editor. His public does not expect that sort of stuff."

"That is because you have not taught the public to want that sort of stuff. But you could do it."

Did he think he was being drawn into an argument with her? Did he think he was on unsafe ground? Joan wondered, because he returned to his writing.

She pressed her point.

"Don't you think that outside the vicious radius of Newspaper Row, there might be room in the public's approval for a newspaper that made it its policy to reflect the happy circumstances of life?

Keating was writing again, and took no notice.

Joan persevered.

"There are men and women in the city who don't want to know the world they live in as anything but beautiful. Those men and women would be glad to find it beauti-

fully reflected in the newspapers, if they could. But a murder or a suicide is usually served up to them by the newspaper at their breakfast tables, as mental food on which to begin the trying day's struggle. And surely the corridors of the police court are not the brightest approaches to happiness for them?"

Keating kept on writing.

"I don't think the world is all sinister, and if it is you can change it. Have you power only to make it evil?"

Keating kept on writing.

"There is a sweetness in life which you do not depict, Mr. Keating. Far from being a world filled with men and women fighting to get out of it, life holds happy circumstances where many would linger if they could."

The little mother—pleading.

Keating answered her, using again, she noticed, almost identically, Tom Manly's words.

"It is not the sort of news an editor wants, and that will sell his papers to the man in the street. You do not understand. You are not a newspaper writer."

That reply gave Joan her cue. True, she was not a newspaper writer, but she could be. Or she could at least try to be one, a good one, and on Keating's paper.

It was an inspiration!

Her heart leapt to it.

"Mr. Keating, could you give me a job on your paper?" she nervously enquired.

Keating kept on writing for a moment, called a boy and gave him some of his little sheets of paper, and turning round to Joan, petrified her with his answer:

"Yes, how soon can you go to work?"

Rapture! And the vision of young girls joyfully read-

ing the helpful articles which she would contribute to the *Record.*

But could she carry on Jerry's work and at the same time be a reporter? Impossible! That was obvious. Therefore she could not be a reporter.

Desolation! And the vision of young girls continuing to be poisoned by the *Record's* slush for women.

But although she could not work in the laboratory and at the same time be a news-writer, she could at least take the newspaper work, (and from her salary keep up the rent of the laboratory) until Jerry returned. Jerry would approve of that, she decided, little suspecting Jerry's fate.

"I can begin tomorrow," she answered.

Keating introduced her to the staff, and she departed, certain that her hour at the *Record* office had been one of the wisest investments of time that she had ever made.

IV

Joan walked briskly and contentedly home, where she joyfully told the stricken Rector and Margaret what she had undertaken. She wanted to tell Tom Manly, too, so she rang him up on the telephone.

"I have some news for you, Tom, but not for publication," she said, wondering what he would think and say when he learned that she had joined the staff of the rival newspaper.

"What is it, Joan?" he enquired.

"I am going to work tomorrow on the *Record,*" she replied, with not a little satisfaction over the thrill she was giving him.

"Oh, yes," replied Tom, "I just read about it in the *Record.*"

"You read about it in the *Record?* Why Tom, the *Record* is not out yet. This is eight thirty p. m., not a. m.," she laughingly replied.

"But the 'bull-dog' edition of the *Record* is just out, Joan. That's the edition which has to be printed early so as to get on the early evening trains for shipment to out-of-town points. The later edition, of course, will not be printed until two a. m., for local distribution.

Joan was receiving her first practical lesson in the business of newspaper making.

"What does it say in the *Record,* Tom?"

"There is a column giving an interview with you, under the head-line 'It's our Press that Ails us.' The substance of the interview is like the material of some of your conversations with me on the same subject. The article is used as a follow-up to the articles which the *Record* printed about Jerry. It refers to you as 'part of the brain' of 'Electrical Englin' and facetiously concludes with the statement that you are now going to contribute the whole of your own brain to the *Record,* as one of its writers who will specialize on uplift work.

Joan did not even hear Tom telling her to cancel the agreement, nor did she hear him asking her if the outcome of the pictures and the dance had not shown her what she would not believe when he tried to assure her it was so. She could think only of the sensational way in which she had been dragged into the newspaper columns like Jerry and the Rector.

It was painfully clear to her now. Keating had skilfully wheedled her into talking as she did, had drawn her on by his silence, had actually written the interview in her presence. She had done the talking and he had kept

on writing. Then he had handed what he wrote to the boy to be printed as soon as she had asked him if she could be a news-writer—after having been actually prompted by him to ask that question—in fact, after having been given by him the cue to make the request.

It was diabolically clever.

Vainly she tried to fathom his motive.

V

"Paregoric, you have been putting something over on me, and on the police," accusingly exclaimed Joan, as she beamed with amazement at what her shaggy friend with the medicinal name had brought to the loft ahead of her on Wednesday morning.

"Where have you been keeping them, and when did you—"

"Yelp, yelp, yelp, yelp, yelp, yelp!"

"Why Paregoric, nobody suspected you were that kind of a dog to begin with, and—"

Three brown little wriggling bodies, toddling along behind their mother wagged frantic tails and emitted baby barks, until Joan stooped down and took all three of them into her arms. At once Madam Paregoric reared proudly upon her hind legs, and caressed her babies and Joan's wrists alternately, with her tickling pink tongue.

Joan tenderly fed her, petted her, and lingeringly bade her good-bye:

"I never expect to see you and your babies again, Paregoric," she confided, with a catch in her voice that was perilously near a sob. "Stick close to them, Paregoric." She fondled one of the babies. "Be a good mother to them. Don't let them run about loose."

CHAPTER X

I

SIX million minutes left," calculated Larry.

Joan had set off for her first day's experience at the *Record* office.

Her departure to take up her writing work gave Larry the idea of continuing his famous thesis, "Conventionalism and Its Perpetrators." He was accustomed to add to it from time to time, closeting himself in his book-filled room on the top floor.

"Six million minutes left out of thirty-one million, to finish my book," he crazily figured with his pencil on a pad of paper.

"Yes, that's right. I am forty years old now. I will live to be sixty. Sixty years of life means thirty-one million minutes. Ten million minutes for sleep. Two million minutes for meals. Seven and a half millions wasted in my childhood on make-believe study and play. Three million minutes for my daily three hours' loaf before and after meals. Half a million to my annual vacations, and two million for Sundays and holidays. That gives me six million minutes left. It isn't very much. I'll have to work faster on this book."

He began to write in his most euphonious and alliteratively elegant style:

"The world that has just been so dearly 'made safe for democracy' is more quickly than ever degenerating into the depths of depravity. The moral going is downwards, and those who do not go willingly are dragged along by their business associates, by their fellow church-members and by their relatives. There is no escape. To-

day is the crisis of civilization. This is the hour of concentrated agony and peril.

"To most people the moral descent is so deliriously enticing and thrilling from the very start, that the fascination of the downfall discounts all sense of danger. They admit their lapse, invite it and justify it in terms of the accommodating law of compensation. 'They have suffered to the uttermost and so they are entitled to be sufeited,' they argue.

"The end of the strain that has suddenly come to wasted men of sapped energy, is lowering them by quick descents from lassitude to looseness. Their women's ordeal of sacrifice has suddenly ceased. Together, men and women, they are yielding to the sweet relief of every available comfort at any required price of pocket-book or soul.

"It is easy, but appalling, to predict what will ensue.

"The rake, Reaction, has met with easy Affluence, and will beget first Prodigality, then Profiteering, after that Penury and eventually Panic. These, in turn, by rapid assimilation, will bring forth Disillusionment, Despair, Cynicism and Crime.

"Prodigality will scatter waste, demand profusion, boast extravagance, spill the world's surplus, throw good money after bad, lavish fortunes upon courtesans, inflate the stock-market, produce a multitudinous crop of upstarts, and immortalize the vampire.

"To harmonize with and propagate, rather than obliterate this phase of convention, the Press will be found printing a hundred inches of advertisements for every inch of news, and diverting billions of excess profits to its coffers, by forcing profit-makers to believe that it will be

better for them to spend their excess in publicity than to give it away for nothing to the Government.

"Profiteering will hide its brigand's face beneath a mask of mock philanthropy, pillage the people, exact one thousand per cent, and teach them to raid one another.

"The Press will propagate this particular phase of convention by flippantly poking fun at it, cajoling its victims, and taking substantial toll of the despoilers.

"Penury will uninvited come to live with hordes of unemployed, treat millionaires like beggars, and grotesquely make the dearly-bought democracy prove to be distress and destitution.

"This development in the evolution of convention will be concealed as long as possible, by successful efforts of the Press to prevent reduction of prices, by ridiculing those who earnestly attempt it, accusing them of hysteria and otherwise annihilating them with epithets.

"Panic will be heralded before it comes. First, mistrust will demand recognition, and loss of confidence will be rumoured, provoking despondency, heart palpitation and the cold sweat of fear, before the monster's arrival in an earthquake that will burst the stock-market bubble, shake the faith of children, harrow the souls of women, and petrify the valour of men.

"The Press will wildly strive to deny this descent of convention by quoting the mighty captains of industry against its existence.

"Disillusionment will stalk naked through the streets, shouting the bitter truth of self-reproach for the humiliation and conviction of all alike.

"At this stage in the evolution of convention the Press will help the downward development by circulating the

new term 'normalcy', recommending a narcotic in place of a genuine remedy for what is wrong.

"Despair will not delay in turning pessimism into inconsolable dejection.

"The Press will conspire to conceal this suicide of convention by diverting attention from it by emphasis of the greater wretchedness of other countries.

"Cynicism will convert critics into carpers, defamers into slanderers, and lampooners into blackmailers.

"At this phase the Press will be able to say with truth: —'the people are copying our methods.'

"But to Crime will be left the function of completing the disintegration of conventional civilization. Citizens will become charlatans. Every man will rob. Every man will expect to be robbed. None will trust his neighbour. Infamous imposition, vicious immorality, base brutality, foul corruption, scandalous profligacy and hellish atrocities of unspeakable kinds—these our citizens will expect to encounter. Success will be measured by villainy. Scoundrels will become a law unto themselves. Money will be God. Money will control men's thoughts—their very souls!

"And the Press will capitalize this downfall of convention by making newspapers the catalogues of the world's sins.

"Then, adequately anticipated, will each descent from one moral platform to another be hourly recorded with flippancy in the Press. The spirit of abandonment will prevail. Commensurate with the moral catastrophes will be the candour with which they will be expected, tolerated and discussed. Readers will know in advance, before picking up their paper, that it will intensify their des-

pondency. They can be certain that its vivid pictures of human depravity will exceed in number and intensity those of the day before. They can eventually expect it to deaden their dependence upon convention as the guardian or promoter of moral integrity. Too late they will recognize the vicious Press to be responsible for not merely the moral but likewise the intellectual disintegration of the world—the one accompanies the other—and already the menace of madness confronts the human race. We are rapidly approaching a near proximity to a world of madmen. The human stock is declining in quality and running low. The decadence of youth is irretrievable. Civilization is cracking, crashing into chaos. Conventionalism, promoted by the vicious Press, makes world insanity inevitable. It is maddening to go either with it or against it."

Mad Larry's mania grew rapidly worse as he wrote.

II

Joan went to work as a reporter for the *Record* on Wednesday afternoon. By Thursday evening she had learned that the average law-abiding citizen had not the remotest idea of the magnitude and efficiency of the machinery of this vicious newspaper for influencing his mind.

She discovered that the equipment of the *Record* comprehended much more than its offices, editors, reporters, telegraphers, printing presses, printers, newsboys, newsagents, advertising salesmen and clerks. She found out that the composite brain of this powerful institution included bankers, judges, policemen, firemen, heads of corporations, detectives, jailers, keepers of dens of iniquity,

men and women, from all stations in life, used as occasion demanded, for various kinds of purposes, and controlled by different influences ranging from salaries through the complicated ramifications of graft, to all sorts of blackmail and threatened exposure.

Joan was astounded at the quality and quantity of dependability secured to the company from individuals bound to it by such inferior motives. From top to bottom of the stupendously active organization, every individual seemed to be straining with all his might to do the undisputed bidding of the master, intent upon getting the greatest possible number of citizens to pay tribute to his treasury, day after day, by unscrupulously providing the material for irresistible headlines and sensational articles. Ethics played small part in the selection and presentation of so-called news. She found everyone on the staff willing not only to destroy reputations, and drive perfectly harmless men and women to suicide and murder, for the sake of headlines, but willing also to stab the nation's best servants in the back, stir up religious and race-hatreds, and provoke war.

The first instructions given to her had been very blunt and very emphatic.

She had been plainly informed, at the start, that she was expected to "catch policy" at once.

Just what this meant became clear within a few hours. Pasted up on her little desk was a printed list of the citizens whose names were never allowed to appear in the paper. Among these were the names of merchants who had refused to advertise in the paper, and other people whom the proprietors envied or hated for personal reasons. The proprietors, themselves, on the other hand,

were to be fulsomely eulogized as frequently as possible.

She observed that her associates privately loathed and condemned the proprietors, and yet obeyed their wishes as conveyed to them through Keating. Keating knew the prejudices and weaknesses of the proprietors by long association. His word was law as to what might be called "news" from the point of view of this particular paper, and as to what might be dangerous for the public to know. To succeed under him meant to cultivate a "nose for news" of the kind that would sell *Record* newspapers without displeasing the paper's friends or advertisers, or interfering with the fame and fortune of its owners.

Joan was also advised that it would help her if she would learn by heart the names of all of the officers of thirty-seven corporations which, while not advertisers, were either controlled by, or paid tribute to, the paper's proprietors. They were some of her masters, as she understood it, and she was their slave.

To make a living as an employee of the *Record* obviously appeared to her to imply that she would have to sacrifice every ideal of truth, humanity and progress; to become the hireling of privilege, playing the dirty game of the paper's unscrupulous owners and controllers.

She could see that the whole psychology of life of her associates, who had succumbed to the servitude exacted by this newspaper, had been changed. Everything that once they must have normally felt concerning truth and justice and charity had been subtly eliminated from their philosophy, which was a hard, cynical set of opinions affected for financial reasons.

She found that these reporters worked under very high pressure. Competition between them and the staff of the

News was furious. The bosses kept the competition alive.

"How are we going to get circulation," Keating asked her, when she at the start protested against being assigned to fabricate an interview with the alleged mistress of an unfrocked clergyman, "if we are going to let the *News* across the street get this scoop?"

Arguments like that usually kept the reporters lined up to their obligations.

Under hot, yellow lights, late at night, the writers squeezed out their vitality as spiders give of their substance to fabricate an ensnaring web, and invariably left their work exhausted. As a consequence they easily became immoderates. At the desk beside her own worked a young woman whose writing-fingers were yellow with nicotine from the cigarettes which alternated with her bluntly pointed pencil. Her habits made Joan despise the conditions which had so tyrannically converted the charm of girlhood into such offensive dross. Early on Thursday evening, after she had told Keating that she would not concoct his requested interview, Joan spoke to her companion:

"I am practicing silence. That's one brand of this newspaper's activity, isn't it? What are you doing, distorting or faking news?"

The preachment was typical of a cub reporter's innocence, and received a derisive answer from her sophisticated neighbour.

"Quit or catch on, girlie!"

"Catch on to what?"

"The code."

"Honour among thieves!" sneeringly retorted Joan.

Her neighbour's scoffing mood disappeared. Her nerv-

ous pencil tapped out a tom-tom to her associates. Her telegraphic message equivalently said:

"Come, help me initiate this novice."

A group of reporters gathered around to lend a hand in grilling the newcomer. It was a typical assortment of the *Record's* species of newspaper people, profoundly proficient in chicanery and astute in playing upon human weaknesses.

Joan sat modestly self-possessed and tranquil before her leering persecutors, with their pipes and green eye-shades, as if she were a spectator instead of an intended victim. Although they concealed it, she disconcerted them with her simplicity and straightforwardness. Their sarcastic jibes rebounded from her to their own discomfort.

"Oh! I don't *have* to do this," challenged the lady with the golden fingers. "I could starve."

Joan answered this pathetic sarcasm with her eyes.

When Joan's eyes spoke she had no need of words.

With them she told her mocker that she sincerely pitied her rather than condemned her, and in the way that women understand each other's moods her tormenter understood, and paid her the tribute of silence.

With one of her glances she convicted a lying accuser on the edge of the group and made him inwardly confess it.

With another glance she took the conceit out of the man who sat on the opposite side of Miss Nicotine, and made him feel humble.

With still another glance she put courage into a cowardly hanger-on and made him want to walk away.

With still other glances she appeased the resentments

of most of them, revived idealism in some of them, and made all of them say to themselves:

"We were once like that."

Only one had not capitulated. An artist. He was cartooning her features. Joan suspected him. She remembered the cartoon in the tea-shop. Presently he passed his sketch around. She saw it.

"*English*" was its title.

Her cheeks reddened.

"English and American," she indignantly corrected.

"Prove it," suggested the artist.

"I don't have to prove it—I feel it."

"Perhaps other English people don't feel quite the same way towards us as you do—you don't feel their feelings—"

"Yes, I do, and I understand them—and understand how to correct their feelings—better than you do. If you had any understanding at all you would see that you can't change their wrong feelings by insulting them."

He had no answer for that. She let it sink in for a moment. Then she explained:

"I want to change some of their dislike for our ways over here. I want them to know us just as we are over here, at our best—not as vicious newspapers represent us to be, at our worst—and I want ourselves to know them over there in the same way—isn't that sensible?"

"Who taught you that?" Her inquisitor was doubtless thinking of what the newspapers taught.

"I haven't been taught much of anything," she spiritedly replied. "My education has been 'to be like my mother'."

He had no answer for that, either.

"Did you draw that cartoon last May?" she demanded.

"Yes."

"Why did you do it?"

"Orders."

"Exactly. That's why people over here see people over there in an unlikable way, because the vicious newspapers are 'ordered' to depict them as unlikable, and vice versa, for all sorts of reasons, spiteful, commercial and political. That's what is the matter! The vicious Press is for sale to these spiteful, commercial, political buyers, and you men and women who make the vicious Press are the cheapest part of it—you get the least of what it gets for 'the use of you'."

The little mother of the tea-shop—belligerent!

Gentle, considerate, usually so like Jerry—but decisively quick on occasion.

The fire was leaping from her eyes, as she deliberately looked at them one by one.

The whole of her heart's emotions went into her thrust—her instinct of what was right—her love of her mother—her love of fair play—her aspiration for mutual understanding between Englishmen and Americans—her love for Jerry, ruined by the vicious Press—her love for the Rector, persecuted by the vicious Press.

She had struck them in a vital spot. She read their surrender in their eyes. Yet they dared not speak and admit it. Economic necessity made them dumb.

It always happened that people who began in jest with Joan ended by being in earnest. Her present persecutors had seen reflections in her of their former selves at their best. The united look of approval in their eyes was more thrilling to her than a great burst of acclamations. For

an instant she dropped her head, blushing, for it had never yet entered into her delicate nature to like being conspicuous. Then suddenly, as if inspired, she lifted it up again firmly, her beautiful bright eyes pleading with them to be true to their better selves, as she asked:

"Will you quit this vicious newspaper with me?"

Keating's grating voice sounded in her ear:

"Get your hat and get out of here."

The reporters slunk back to their fetters.

When Larry opened the door for Joan at nine o'clock, he looked at her face solicitously, and said to himself:

"She is going crazy, like me."

III

This was a never to be forgotten Thursday evening at the Rector's home. Always on Thursdays, it was his custom to sit with Margaret and Joan and Larry and go over the material for his Sunday sermon. Together they would suggest, discuss, and outline various points which the Rector would incorporate into his Sunday talk.

It was three days since Larry had spectacularly emptied the Church Hall (in a way of which the Rector, Margaret and Joan had no knowledge) while the Rector knelt in prayer upstairs gathering strength to assail the roysterers with a withering denunciation. During these three days, he had sat at home, alone, with his head in his hands, a broken man.

All Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday he had pored over what was to be, on the following Sunday, the supreme effort of his life, and when Joan entered she found him, with Margaret by his side, seated at the table where they had together prepared so many sermons, and where

to-night they fell naturally into discussing the theme for the coming Sunday: "The Tyranny of the Press."

"Should we not substitute for 'Press' the word 'Propaganda,' 'the Tyranny of Propaganda'," suggested Joan. "I might have held the job if it had depended on learning how to write facts, but I found the *Record* to be not a 'news'-paper but a vicious propaganda producer. Its news columns, as well as its editorial columns are paid propaganda funnels."

"I like 'Tyranny of Convention as Perpetrated by the Press'," recommended Larry. "I am writing a chapter on that topic, which I think will be timely—"

"It is the vicious Press that we must have the courage to attack," interjected the Rector. "Our relentless foe, that pursues us into the sacred confines of our homes."

"I found the *Record* to be a highly organized machine for distorting facts," explained Joan. "Its masters are the local advertisers, publicity or propaganda-buyers, and the banks which lend it money. It distorts facts for political, or financial, or private reasons. Its speciality seems to be to drag out old skeletons and rattle their dry bones before the world."

"It is more tyrannical than our vested interests, because in serving them it controls them," suggested Larry.

"It lies on its front page, and retracts obscurely on its last page," added Margaret. "It establishes a market for pretence by creating fictitious fame for men who pay it for notoriety."

"I found it put together by cynical worldlings doing a work they despise because they believe that life is a matter of dog eat dog," Joan continued. "It is, as Larry says, 'the organ of plutocracy.' It refrains from injuring

a man not because he is great or good or wise or useful, but because he is wealthy or of service to united wealth. And the latest mean thing that I discovered about the *Record* was that it has actually just hired thugs to break up a threatened strike of its newsboys."

"And to think that this poison-worm comes crawling upon our breakfast plates every morning," expostulated Larry.

"Its function is the betrayal of public opinion. It is an utterly ruthless and utterly corrupt despotism," continued Joan. "It is as independent as a highwayman."

"Ravening beast, venomous serpent," added Larry. "We live with it, unarmed and unprotected, and yet we let it live."

"The vicious Press has actually usurped the place of the Gospel," moaned the Rector, betraying his suffering in his face.

"As well as the function of our nation's chief executive," emphasized Larry. "Think of the stigma everlastingly stamped upon the vicious section of our Press by the head of our nation, who was compelled to tell that class of newspapers that if they did not cease their indecent personal attacks upon his family, he would step down out of his high place and thrash them."

"And just think of the foreign hatred it has brought us," quietly remarked Margaret, whose eyes were swollen from secret weeping. "When father and I took our trip abroad we were constantly being humiliated to learn that our people had provoked an atmosphere of disgust around the world by the flippancy of manners and speech that our Press had taught them to believe was smartness. And as to foreign opinion of many of our papers themselves,

there is nobody who reads them abroad who does not despise them."

"Our own people despise and hate our vicious newspapers just as thoroughly as foreigners, even more so; yet they seem to have no idea what to do about them," remarked Joan. "They indifferently take it for granted that they must go on reading falsehoods for the balance of their days."

"Our Freedom of the Press," vociferated Larry, "has become our Tyranny of the Press."

Margaret interruptingly placed her finger over her lips, and nodded to where her father had surprisingly fallen asleep, exhausted in his chair.

Caustic Larry cunningly grinned and muttered to himself:

"Going to sleep over his sermon—that's for others to do."

Larry peered knowingly at the broken pastor, then at Margaret's swollen eyes, finally at the pale, worn face of Joan, then rose, crossed quietly over to the window, lifted the blind, looked towards the flashing electric signs that showed where the city's happy frolickers were joyously gathered together, and remarked aloud:

"This is a booby-hatch. We're all smitten."

CHAPTER XI

I

JOAN sat in the moonlight, sleepless.

Abandoned, dismissed, thwarted, ostracized, and yet queerly void of self-pity.

The persecution of her friends and the spoliation of her sex obsessed her.

Our vicious Press! Monopolizing her thoughts! Embittering her heart!

"It is our vicious Press that ails us."

The words were constantly upon her lips. She kept ejaculating them. With each repetition their invasion of her mind advanced another step.

"And nobody seems to care," she reflected. "It is pathetic."

She looked out into the moonlight, and over the roofs of the city's slumbering multitudes.

"Asleep!" she thought. "I must awaken them."

She looked farther, as far as the *Record* office.

"Wide awake," she realized. "Could I put this vicious despot forever to sleep!"

She looked longer, and dejectedly soliloquized:

"Our people are all right. It is our vicious Press that ails us."

She was fearfully depressed and becoming intensely determined.

Jerry loomed up before her, like an image on the picture screen, worshipped her with his sad eyes for a moment, seemed to caution her, and faded away.

"Jerry," she cried, and tried to stretch towards him her arms trembling with love and rapture.

His eyes fastened upon her—inundated her with tenderness and pity.

She poured out her passionate love to him, told him of the intolerable aching in her heart, strained towards him with all her might—and he was gone.

Hopelessly gone!

The larger emotion slowly returned, absorbed her, crowded all things else out of her heart.

"I have the courage to begin the attack upon this plunderer of our people," she reflected, "but have I the strength to continue it? It is a man's job. Can't the Rector do it?"

She began to cross-examine herself mercilessly.

"Why do I think such unfeminine thoughts?

"Am I turning into a man instead of developing as a woman?

"Would any man approve of such a tendency? Would Tom?

"Why not be like other women, natural?

"Why sacrifice youth and face empty old age?

"Why not let Tom take me?

"I am compelled to live with other people, why not get in tune with them?

"Isn't my oddness costing me—youth, love, happiness, health, children?

"Was it hopeless for me to be so attached to Jerry? Was it mockery?

"Isn't it peculiar for a young woman of my age to refuse a man like Tom Manly?

"Isn't it strange that I don't associate with other young men?

"Wasn't it ultra-original to try to become a reporter?

"Isn't it irregular to try to fight the Press?

"Isn't it eccentric to oppose custom?

"Isn't it unnatural to be brooding here like this at this moment?

"Is 'everybody out of step but me'?"

Recollection of the Rector's warning intimidated her: *"The penalty for oddness is dementia."* She thought of Larry.

"Am I going out of my mind?

"Isn't my attitude illogical, irrational, arbitrary?

"Isn't it so unconventional as to be actually funny?

"Nobody likes a girl to be like this—at least nobody nowadays.

"Maybe God made me too much like a boy?"

Suddenly she checked her self-denunciations, as she remembered one of Jerry's questions:

"Joan, don't a woman's sensations sometimes fight against her instinct?"

She remembered how she answered him:

" A woman's instinct has frequently held out successfully against a seemingly logically proven absurdity—" She was startled. "Am I holding out now, or am I slipping—giving in to convention under the pressure of circumstances—going down with the rest?"

She got up and brought Jerry's diary that she had taken away from the loft.

His legacy.

Under her shaded reading-light she wept over what he had written after his conscientious struggle to conquer his love for her:

"Joan has shown me that a good woman following her instinct can't be wrong, can't be influenced by degrading

conventions, must of necessity be above what is commonplace, practically inspired, almost Divine. And that is why men worship good women, not merely covet them, in the way they covet the conventional among them, who never can know what it means to be loved, poor creatures, being merely coveted. And so, for a man to have a good and devoted woman near him is to possess a Guardian Angel, and to dismiss one is like spurning Divine inspiration and protection."

"Poor creatures!" Joan repeated Jerry's words. "How can they help being dragged under by such influences as the tyrant propagates," she added, shuddering over her own nearness to the tempting rapids. "It's pulling them in. They must jump in. It isn't they themselves that are so foolish. It's our vicious Press that ails us."

She read on:

"A woman functions normally and best by influence rather than by direct action..... God give Joan strength to be and to remain true to that alone which it is a good woman's stupendous privilege to be—a woman."

His legacy to her.

So like her own little exhortation to the Rector to be and remain a minister—which he had not heeded—failing disastrously.

Like an admonition and a warning and a prophecy—to her speculating about mannishly and aggressively taking up the Rector's fight.

She read on:

"Normal women instinctively express themselves through their beloved, by inspiration and encouragement .... It requires a catastrophe to the instrument of their influence to bring them to the front and force

them to assume his place, although there have been occasions when, in so doing, they have not only re-established him, but won to him and to his efforts more followers than he could have won himself."

"If I do it would Jerry say I am becoming abnormal?" she asked herself.

She snapped off the electric light for the more peaceful light of the moon. Her hands clasped the legacy of Jerry's diary, and lay extended upon the table before her. Her head was bent a little downward, and her air was that of one who is lost in thought, steeped in dreams, inspired, not conscious of herself or her surroundings.

The incentive grew stronger within her and began to assume the definite form of an obligation.

"No, it isn't a man's job," she reflected. "It may look like a man's job, but a woman will have to do it. No man can do it. The Rector can't do it. They won't even come to hear him. No other man could ordinarily be expected to do it and thereby undo his life's work, which is dependent upon leaving things as they are."

Eventually there swept upon her an overpowering surge of desire to crush the vicious Press to fragments, and with it came the tempestuous suggestion of an undertaking whose magnitude both awed and allured her.

The little mother of the tea-shop—tumultuous!

II

Margaret saw Joan in the moonlight, through her open doorway, and pitied her.

Under the chill whiteness, beside her window, Joan's face was colourless, pure and infinitely sad and sweet.

Margaret quietly entered Joan's room to comfort her,

but when Joan turned towards her, her eyes alight with the ardour of her inspiration, Margaret realized, and said to herself:

"They could dismiss her, but they have not broken her. She was meant to be a man."

And instead of taking Joan's little form into her arms, Margaret suffered Joan to huddle up close beside her on the couch in front of the window and mother her, and consolingly say:

"Margaret is going to tell Joan why she has been crying so much."

But they both cried quietly together then, while the city of less worried women peacefully slept.

Finally Margaret confided what was troubling her.

"The book shop, Joan—I am afraid to tell him—it must be kept from him—it is going into bankruptcy unless—unless—could you come down in the morning—I —we—"

Joan hushed Margaret's heart-breaking sobs, and took her to her room and tucked her into bed with sympathetic little commendations of her splendid struggle.

"You couldn't beat Pogo and the Press, too, Margie. But it's going to be done. You'll see! And there are going to be more people read books than read papers or go to the movies. You'll see! And I'll certainly come over in the morning, and we'll go through things, and I'll tell you a big secret that has just come to me. So go to sleep now and see if you can't dream about what I shall tell you."

Joan returned to her room, and dropping upon her knees beside her bed, began to pray, at the dawn.

Larry, hearing the creaking noise caused by the stealthy

footsteps of Margaret and Joan, and wondering who could be prowling about the house at that hour of the morning, crept downstairs from his attic room and caught sight of Joan through her open door, as she knelt beside her bed.

Her face turned heavenward, still pale in the moonlight, but looking towards the dawn, seemed touched with rapture, and Larry paused.

Gazing fixedly, and touching his finger to his forehead, he hoarsely whispered:

"Mad!"

III

Joan's consciousness drifted away into the enchanted realms of sleep, and saw oppressive pictures of a world of driven men and women cringing beneath the lash of a monstrous tyrant, whose scowling face was the face of Keating, contorted in cruel thought behind his spectacles.

And as she watched, there came a white robed form, with wings, leading her away from the throng of men and women into a peaceful woodland, where the birds that had been quiet burst forth into song, as if worshipping the one who led her. And Joan fell upon her knees, and bowed her head and crossed her hands upon her breast, until the Angel, divinely beautiful, lifted her up and reassuringly said to her:

"I am thy voice that guideth thee. Thou callest me 'instinct,' I was given to thee, to guide thee, at the time my name was given to thee by thy mother. Little Joan, my beloved, I am the spirit of Joan of Arc."

Trembling from head to foot, Joan raised her tear-filled eyes, and clasped her little hands on high, implor-

ingly. Speechless she stood, while the glory of her guardian angel flowed over her, clothing her with splendour.

"Ere I became thy voice, little Joan, a voice was given to me, too, and it led me apart and away from the ways of men and women around me, as I have led thee away, and it gave me a mission to perform, as I now give thee thy mission. Behold!"

Joan looked, and saw far back into the past, the first war-march of Joan of Arc against the tyrant. Before her eyes moved a great company of horsemen riding two and two, with Joan of Arc in silver armour, astride a white stallion, surrounded by the applauding mob and bowing her plumed head to left and right. Bravely glinted the sun upon her shining panoply, and the strains of wind-blown music heralded the God-given fighting strength of the Maid!

Thus Joan saw, marvelling, her God-given instinct—the power from above and beyond her that had borne her puny self unassailed against the might of Convention.

"Now look once more." The noble figure pointed, and, as Joan gazed, the pageant faded and appeared again transformed. There in the place of Joan of Arc she saw her own slight figure, clad not in the armour of war but in the tatters of a little newsboy, with hair close-cropped to her childish head. Behind her and around surged a vast army of workers, newsboys and reporters, in the poor garb of toil, teachers and ministers, fathers stumbling beneath intolerable burdens, mothers with girl infants in their arms, downtrodden sales-women, and all the battered subjects of the despot. And as they charged, she led them, against the Citadel of the vicious Press.

"But how can I dare?" the little Joan protested humbly.

"Thy tyrant is more evil than was mine," said Joan of Arc.

"But they will call me eccentric—"

"They called me eccentric, too."

"If it is commanded—"

"It is thy crusade for a holy cause," responded her "voice." "Look!"

Her army of the oppressed was mustered there in Newspaper Row, full and surging ever fuller. A deep murmur arose from the great multitude—an instant's silence—and then a stupendous roar, tremendous, shattering—

"Joan!"

The figure of Keating appeared at an upper window of the *Record* building, the flag of liberty unfurling in his hand.

"Freedom of the Press," he shrieked against them.

"Liberty is not Tyranny," came the new-found voice of the mob.

Like the rise and fall of the tide, now loud, now louder, Joan's name beat upon her consciousness.

"Joan! Joan!"

"I am coming," she called aloud her proud response.

And in the light of the new day, Joan awoke and prayed.

IV

It seemed to her that she had hardly slept an hour; but she found that Margaret had gone, and her father was sitting alone at the breakfast table, before his untouched plate, with his head in his hands, his unread papers beside him.

They had not awakened Joan, because there was no longer anywhere for her to go.

She stood beside the Rector's chair, and gently encircled his throbbing head with her little arm and drew it to her breast, where she held him for a moment, thinking to comfort him; then pressed her lips to his burning forehead and hurriedly turned to go, not wanting to eat and powerless to speak.

The telephone bell rang faintly as she passed it in the hall, on her way out.

"I'll—answer—it—Larry," she said, her voice choked with sobs, as Larry cautiously stepped aside, out of her way, and quickly guarded his legs as if fearing to be kicked.

"Hello, hello," she answered.

"It's nobody, Larry," she told him. "The operator says the 'phones keep ringing because the circuits are out of order."

Larry still stood out of reach of her feet, apparently in dreadful awe of them.

"Poor Larry," thought Joan, "poor Larry is a child again."

The telephone prompted her to call up Tom Manly's bachelor apartments. She wanted to talk to someone, to him, anyone, about her new plans. She realized that Tom would not be at the *News* office at this hour of the morning—he could have left there only a few hours before. But she could hardly wait until he should return at six o'clock in the evening. Still, she had never before telephoned to his apartments, and she did not like to do so now. She decided she would go to the loft first, and take care of the Paregorics once again. Perhaps she might

telephone him from there. On the way she encountered him hurrying over to the loft to visit her, and stood with him at the corner that was so intimately identified with her life—where she had last seen Jerry.

Tom's face was very sober. He lost no time with formalities. His darkened eyes suggested that he had slept as little as Joan. In his right hand he carried a rolled up copy of the Morning *Record,* which he emphatically slapped against his trouser-leg to punctuate the mercilessly practical lashes which he administered to her.

She needed sympathy and craved co-operation, and he gave her instead vigorous opposition and condemnation.

"Joan, you need a guardian," he began, to remind her vividly of her loneliness.

Joan thought of her "voice," and felt she had a very good guardian already. She replied to him:

"It isn't what I need that matters. It is what others need. The world needs a mother—mothers—aggressive moral influences."

"Feminine aggressiveness—" Tom started to say, deprecatingly.

"Yes, some of your American 'pep'—for *moral* profit. You're full of it over here. You want everybody to have some of it. You saturate the air with it. It's inescapable, and I've caught it now—and caught it badly. You are going to see how it works—in a woman—in a woman who is disgusted with the lack of it for moral purposes in some men."

"Joan, Joan—please, Joan—" He tried to quiet her.

The little mother of the tea-shop—defiant.

Gentle, tranquil, placid by temperament — decisively indomitable upon occasion.

"Joan, I have never seen you act like this before—you're going mad. You've tried to revolutionize the Press, you wouldn't listen to my advice, and you have failed, been kicked out and disgraced—"

"I am going to try again," she retorted hotly.

"And you'll get hated for life if you do. You are courting annihilation."

Joan made no reply. She dared not tell him her plan, now. She wanted help, not interference.

He continued:

"You have learned what a bad newspaper is, you have had experience—"

"I am going to get some more," she shot back at him, getting hotter.

"They'll work up a case against you, they'll hound you until you come to realize what side your bread is buttered on," he replied.

Joan thought, "What a humiliating confession for a newspaper editor to make!"

"Tom, why don't you attack the *Record* and its policy and save me from disgrace?" It was a leading question.

"Nobody believes the *Record*. Everyone discounts its articles. Therefore, what's the use? And besides, if the *News* attacked the *Record* we would stir up the *Record* and make what's bad enough still worse."

Joan noted the inconsistency with which he belittled the *Record's* influence and yet feared to intensify it. She pressed him:

"The *Record's* policy of sensational exposure is no worse than a conspiracy of silence concerning things as they really are."

He parried with a warning:

"Keating didn't take you on his staff on merit, you know. He had some kind of other motive."

He had not been able to lead her. He had decided to master her. But he hesitated. Joan had never seemed more alluringly indomitable than she did at this moment. Standing so much apart from every one, there at the corner, with hundreds of other women passing back and forth beside her, her lonesome little form stood out conspicuously against the larger figures of the others as a background.

"So much smaller, and yet so much stronger-willed," he reflected.

"Joan," he went on, pleadingly, "I don't believe you really care for what you are attempting. You are doing it as a sort of duty, but you don't like it, do you?"

She took some time to answer him. She knew he was telling her what he thought would be best for her. It was his practical way of seeing things. She pitied him for his limitations, but she was not inappreciative, nor ungrateful for his interest in her.

"If I say 'Yes, I like it,' I might seem to be merely selfish. If I say 'No, I do not like it,' I shall not be telling the truth. There have been things about it that were not likable. I know there are going to be others just as unpleasant. But I will tell you, that my mission—my work, I mean—what I intend to do, means more than anything in the world—"

She hesitated a moment, remembering how much Jerry had meant to her, and wondering if anything could possibly come to mean as much.

"It absorbs me, if that is what you mean by liking it. I will allow nothing to compete with it."

She began to flush deeply. A firmer tone came into her voice. Her beautiful eyes were aglow with enthusiasm.

"You may think me 'grotesque'—a sort of female oddity, but my whole heart is in it. What I have seen has made me decide that someone simply must take up and at least start the struggle against the tyranny of the vicious Press. It must be overturned, and only fighting will do it. And I am going to enjoy the fight—I tell you that candidly. The obstructions, the condemnations, the plots, the villainous tactics to be used against me, are going to stimulate instead of intimidating me. I would not give it up for any man—or woman—" she added the last two words rather hurriedly, for fear he might fancy that she had betrayed a feeling for him.

Her hurry to cover up or conceal the apparent slip of her tongue did not escape him. A dying hope breathed again within him.

"One never knows, Joan, what one will give up for a friend—a real friend," he ventured.

"Perhaps not," she replied as she moved on her way to see Margaret, "but maybe a friend—a real friend—wouldn't demand it."

He followed her eyes as they scanned the unconsciously driven crowd and then looked vindictively from the mass of hurrying figures up to the fourth floor of the Record building.

"Joan," he pleaded, as if to detain her, "can I—can I ever be your friend—a real friend—" He stopped, believing that he saw a soft moisture in her eyes.

She was thinking of Jerry's love for her, that had been revealed at this same corner, in the midst of the bustling traffic, and remembering his test of true love: "Proof of

love and right to be loved is based on sacrifice alone." She had repeated that to Tom once before. She suspected that he might be thinking of it now as he spoke to her. She was thinking of his patient and aggressive efforts to influence her—aggressiveness like that which she was about to use—like that which his countrymen—her countrymen now—believed wins everything, eventually. She found herself speculating on the impossibility of ever capitulating—of ever being influenced by determined Tom.

"I think, Joan," he continued, "I think I could help you—I think I could save you from terrible things right now—I think I could save you from yourself."

She looked at him in her motherly little way, and replied:

"I probably shouldn't merit a friendship of sacrifice, Tom; but for your own sake, be brave enough to save yourself, and make me happy too, by letting me know when you get the courage to do it."

She let the Paregorics wait, and crossed hurriedly over the street in the direction of Margaret's book shop, leaving him standing alone and looking after her.

What did she mean?

Was she flinging his own words back into his face?

No! As she reached the other side of the street she deliberately turned around and looked back at him.

The suspicion that she could love him shook him to the depths of his soul.

She passed out of sight into the book shop.

He could remember the blush on her face as she listened to his halting words, and her eyes full of light as she earnestly looked at him and said:

"Make me happy, too, by letting me know when you get the courage to do it." "To do what?" he wondered. "She was talking of sacrifice." He pondered, and remembered, and never ceased to remember, until the time came to tell her.

V

Trinity Church Book Shop was empty of customers.

An ugly notice tacked on the front door announced the date of a "Bankruptcy Sale."

Next door roared the presses of the *News* manufacturing "fiction" for a hundred thousand readers.

Inside, Margaret sat and stared at the morning copy of the *Record* bearing an account of the "Failure of Preacher Holden's Book Shop."

"It doesn't matter, Margie," Joan kept repeating to her. "It doesn't matter. It can be started all over again, like new. Five hundred concerns are failing every week—"

"But he does not know," sobbed Margaret.

Joan remembered the Rector sitting with his papers unread, as she left him.

The telephone bell rang.

"No need to answer it," said Margaret, dully, "We are not allowed to sell anything."

"No need anyhow," added Joan, "The 'phone circuits are in trouble to-day. It's nobody."

"The *Record* claims that the telephone currents are being interfered with by wireless amateurs," said Margaret. "Nobody will believe that, but it gives them a pretext for starting a campaign to control the amateur news-gatherers by recommending the use of standardized receiving sets. At the commencement of wireless tele-

phony, the *Record* enviously fought general use of it by complaining about the 'jamming of the air.' Then it fought to restrict radio-broadcasting to music, when what the people want is *news*. People can get better music out of their phonographs than they can get out of the air. And now the *Record* wants limited receiving-sets as well as controlled broadcasting."

Margaret's comment made Joan remember Jerry's prediction about this.

The telephone summoned them again, insistently.

"I'll answer it, Margie," said Joan, "You just sit there and brush away those tears."

"Hello!"

"Oh, is that you, Larry?—What?—Yes!—what? you mean?—oh Larry—"

Joan's face turned deathly pale. Margaret spasmodically clutched at her weak heart and gasped.

"Oh Margie, poor Margie," sobbed Joan, helplessly, "Your father—I left him at the table—he had not read the *Record*—Larry says he opened it after I left—read it— and—and fainted—heart attack—the doctor has been there—they have put him to bed—poor Daddy Holden—poor dear Margie—there—there, that's a dear good girl, don't take it so hard—we'll have to help him to be brave—Margie, we'll have to help him to keep being brave."

Hysterically they hurried home.

VI

Joan and Margaret and Larry watched beside the Rector's bed.

Joan and Margaret watched his ashen face, Larry's dazed eyes stared wildly at the faces of all three.

"All of us mad," he reflected. "Soon the Rector will be free."

The doctor had done what he could.

"Just watch him," he had said, "until I return."

Joan covered her face with her hands and knelt with Margaret beside the bed. Her eyes strained heavily from weeping and watching the death mask creeping stealthily over the sick man's face. Tomorrow, and the next day, and weeks and years would come—and Daddy Holden would not be there. For nearly three years of her life he had influenced her. Sixty years of age, and all of it devoted to influencing others—unsuccessfully!

A failure!

The thought of it suffocated her. She was overcome. Worn out with sleeplessness and worry, she gradually sank into a heavy slumber, half flung across the bed.

"No, not a failure," she heard a familiar voice say.

"But I am a failure," she heard the Rector reply. "I am going at the very end of years of failure—and I am afraid—I am afraid."

She watched him. He was turning round. He wanted to go back—shrinking, cowering, terrible beyond endurance to behold, he began to weep. Deep sobs shook his agonized body, and great tears rolled down his furrowed face.

"Have no fear, comrade," said the familiar voice, "thou hast not failed—thou hast been brave!"

Joan looked and saw that it was the spirit of Joan of Arc speaking.

"Oh, Joan of Arc, help him!" she cried.

"Joan, you here?" the dying man pleaded, stretching out his hands towards her.

"Yes, Joan is here to comfort thee," replied the spirit of Joan of Arc. "I am her voice. Thou hast influenced her and helped her to be brave like thyself. That was thy mission—to influence others. That shall be her mission, too. She will remain behind a while to carry on thy work. She is younger and stronger, and I will help her. So thou art not a failure. Look, she gives thee her hand to help thee over. It is but a step."

Joan could not see for blinding tears. His hand slipped from her grasp.

"But I know—I am a failure," sobbed the Rector, uncomforted yet, tortured by despair and dread in his utter weakness.

Joan saw him turn again to her and stretch out his arms.

"Come, brave comrade!" The voice of Joan of Arc rang out, convincing in its strength and help.

Once more Joan saw him turn to her, on the very threshold, and as he looked at her through his tears, he smiled happily now and called back to her:

"Joan, be brave."

Margaret clutched her hysterically, awakened her and cried, "He is gone!"

Dead!

Joan stared at the beloved face—the same smile on it that she had seen in her sleep.

On Larry's face shone an answering smile of insane satisfaction.

"Better dead than mad," he exclaimed.

Margaret, sobbing in a frenzied grief, glared bitterly at the maniac, tragically tempting him to send her to her parent scarcely sooner than the unbearable anquish of

her separation from him might unaggravated have done.

"You too," grinned the madman, savagely reaching for her neck with his twitching fingers.

And terrorized Margaret, clutching at her weak heart already fatally overstrained by her shock of grief, crumpled up dead from fright.

"And it's time for you, too." cackled the frantic lunatic, moving murderously towards Joan.

Joan realized she was dying before he reached her. The horrible creature, gliding stealthily towards her across Margaret's dead body, was killing her as he came. She stood wavering, trembling, unable to move. A bare fraction of a second remained to her before her end. Driven by desperation, she feebly took a half-step towards him, instinctively lifted her right foot threateningly as his hands reached for her throat, menacing him with the punishment which she had taught him to fear, and hopelessly screamed in his face:

"Larry, do you want me to kick you on the shins?"

The trivial phrase touched the one chord of response in the unhinged mind.

Stronger than his weakened mind his sense of self-preservation dominated him.

The wild thing stopped in his tracks, covered up his legs with his arms, whimpered like a baby, and slunk back, afraid of her, into the pantry, where submissively he went about his usual duties, until when the doctor rang the bell and the parrot screeched his usual greeting, he fiendishly wrung the bird's neck, threw it into the Rector's bed-room, then let the doctor in and leeringly informed him:

"All the crazy inmates of this damned booby-hatch

have come to a timely death in there, excepting me."

The doctor went in and tried to revive Joan.

VII

On Sunday the Rector delivered his sermon against the "Tyranny of the Vicious Press,"—not the one he had intended, but the most effective of his career.

In the hearts of thousands who jammed Newspaper Row and bared their heads as the two caskets were borne into Trinity Church was sown the seed of a revolution needing only a leader's word of command to make it sprout over night and burst forth in the morning.

"Heart attacks." said the newspapers.

"Press attacks," said the readers.

Relatives, cold and mercenary as most relatives are, took quick and calculating charge of the Rector's effects, and gave Joan until the morning after the funeral to leave.

The Church elders met and issued a call to the pastor of a rival city's most popular Church. It would be his function to reorganize the book shop.

The city authorities summarily despatched Larry to an ayslum, and, as he left he whispered to Joan that it was "a most timely thing to do."

Alone in her room, for the last time, on Sunday evening, Joan, prostrated, remembered Tom's earnest words: "I think I could save you from terrible things—"

Terrible things!

Terrible things were happening to her, crowding and closing in upon her.

Frightful things!

Maddening things!

How was she to live and not go crazy, remembering them!

"The penalty for oddness is dementia," the Rector had said.

The spectre of insanity loomed up before her and pointed to the accusing symptoms that already marked her as his own—her moonlight aberrations—her hallucinations about Joan of Arc—her quarrel with Tom—and then, the breaking point, the shock of the awful deaths!

"The penalty for oddness is dementia!" she repeated.

Mentally agitated she groped hopelessly for something to lean upon—counting her losses—

Jerry gone!

The Rector gone!

Margaret gone!

Her home gone!

Her employment gone!

Keating hating her!

Tom fighting her!

The loft!—she could sleep there—but could she live there with its memories?—could she stand it?—the Paregorics!—she suddenly recollected that she had not seen them, had not fed them since Thursday—she had lost them, too!

Everything gone!

She knew that she could not go on—she could not endure it. She was probably mad already. How in pity could she be expected to want to live?

But she had to live! Overwhelming realization! To have to live and not want to live!

Compelled, condemned to live! More terrible than the sentence of death!

O agony unspeakably more awful than the agony of death!

She moved about among her few belongings, gathering them together, mechanically, lifelessly, as in a trance.

Delirious in her desolation, she began, incoherently, to talk to herself:

"Tomorrow—if I could get through the night—perhaps tomorrow I could want to live—but to-night—alone—it is unbearable to-night—I am afraid to-night—God, show me how to die without offending you—to-night—"

God would answer her prayer and show her how. She felt sure of it. She made ready.

Jerry's picture, and the legacy of his diary must be with her at the end—she clasped them to her tightly, caressing them and mothering them childishly.

"I am ready now," she sobbed.

The little mother of the tea-shop—demented.

"It won't take much—to-night," she confidingly persuaded—"it won't take much—you see, I've suffered so much—I can't stand much more—I can't—"

Her ramblings suddenly ceased. It had come to her. She had thought of the way. She could end it all and not offend God. She could do it honourably. She could do it by actually starting to perform her mission delegated by Joan of Arc. The discovery of the way brought comfort to her tortured heart. She went about it calmly and mechanically, bereft of reason, dazed.

The little mirror on her dressing-table had told her how. Her beautiful tresses! Memories of her dear mother who had treasured them and cared for them! She dotingly toyed with them as she remembered her mother to have done—fondled them, as she fondled Jerry's pic-

ture close to her breast, childishly, pathetically unsettled in her mind. Her remaining treasures—all that were left—mementos of her mother and of Jerry. Jerry should go with her—just as he was, in her arms, she decided; but her mother's treasure, her tresses—must go first. That would be the way. To be faithful to her mission and to Joan of Arc they would have to go. That would kill her—to-night—she was deliriously certain. So she could go at once, in the very act of beginning her mission. That would be honourable.

Moving listlessly, as if walking in her sleep, she brought two envelopes to contain her locks. On one of them she wrote:

"For Jerry, if he ever returns."

She lingered many minutes over his name, living over again, at the end, what had been the sweetest experience of her life.

On the other envelope she wrote:

"For Tom."

Snip, snip, snip clicked the scissors in her determined little fingers.

"To make me like a boy—and like Joan of Arc," she prattled.

She dared not look in the mirror.

Snip, snip, snip, snip—

It was all gone now—everything was gone!

She had come to the absolute end of everything!

She looked in the mirror—turned deathly white—looked at her tresses lying on the table—then felt her head go dropping down and her cheek touching them, as she yielded to the sweet relief that gently closed her eyes and ended her unendurable strain.

CHAPTER XII

I

AT the corner.

"Extra, *News,*" called a soft-voiced, shivering newsboy, at six o'clock on Monday evening.

"Extra, *Record,*" shouted a rough-voiced, stronger boy, glowering at his frail new competitor, as they both rushed for the two editors, who were meeting, as usual, with the cordiality of rival gladiators.

"*News,* Mister," persuaded the soft-voiced newsboy in the new pair of knickers.

Tom Manly pricked up his ears. Had he not heard that voice before?

Keating's inscrutable eyes measured the boy from head to foot.

Pogo had not yet turned on his electric sign to brighten the darkening street.

Both men bought both papers, as usual, started to read them, and the newsboys disappeared.

"Who's the new kid?" enquired an elderly newsman of a newswoman. "Looks a little queer. Something wrong with him, eh, Nell?"

"Been through hell, I guess, like most kids nowadays," observed Nell.

Joan's little heart beat wildly with exultation, as she left Tom and Keating. The test had been a success. It was her first victory. She had prepared so carefully for it in the loft during the day.

Arriving at the loft very early, unnoticed, she found the Paregoric family famished, but faithfully waiting and hoping. All her original army had returned too.

Such a noisy welcome they gave her! As well as she could she entered into their happiness with them.

"I'm not quite myself," she explained, "or we would have a livelier time."

There was no food, so she went out to get them some and on the way made several purchases at out-of-the-way shops.

After the dogs had been fed she cut and disfigured her newly bought knickers in several places to make them look old and worn, artistically soiled her new blouse by rubbing it on the floor, and after a careful toilet, hiding in the loft during the day, she had ventured out at dark, actually challenging Tom and Keating to recognize her.

Thrilled with her success, her face was radiant as she slipped away.

"What yer doin' on my corner?" the rough-voiced newsboy with the *Records* growled in her ear, as he overtook her.

Joan turned and faced her antagonist for a moment in dismay.

The next moment she felt the crack of his fist as it landed squarely on her eye and bowled her over into a kneeling group of newsboys who were matching pennies.

She was stunned for an instant, but scrambled to her feet and looked for a policeman. There was one across the street. She remembered having seen him looking towards her just as she was struck. Possibly he expected her to be attacked. His face was now discreetly turned away.

"Wallop him back, kid," encouraged the middle-aged newsman, with copies of the *News* under his arm. His attitude seemed to say "I am with you."

Later on Joan learned that he was an official slugger for the *News,* employed to beat up anybody who interfered with the sale of its papers. Later on she also learned that policemen would not have dared to prohibit any of the corner-wars of either newspaper.

"He ain't got no right on my corner," bullied the rough-voiced seller of *Records,* itching to plant a second blow on Joan's other eye.

"He can go where he pleases," retorted the middle-aged newsman. "Smash him back, kid."

"You go to hell," responded the young *Record* bully, backing away, afraid of the older man, but not in the least afraid of Joan. "I'll fix him," he vindictively promised as he slunk away unsatisfied.

The disappointed audience of newsboys went back to its game of matching pennies.

II

"He's blacked your eye, kid," the woman with newspapers under her arm said to Joan.

That was comforting. Joan had believed he had torn off the top of her head.

"I'll buy *Records* and beat him by selling more of them on his corner than he does. That's what I'll do," vouchsafed Joan, by way of re-establishing herself in the estimation of her new-found friends.

"You can't do that," the middle-aged newsman informed her. "You can't sell our papers and the *Records* too. You're green at this, aren't you?" He sympathetically scrutinized Joan's haggard face.

And Joan had gone to the pains of making her clothes look old, and thought she was acting so cleverly!

It was useless to pretend!

"Yes, I have just started," she admitted. "Have you got to fight in this job?"

"That's the newspaper game, fighting, you know!"

Yes, she remembered! Fighting the powerless!

The *News* had certainly picked a capable ally when it selected the middle-aged man to do its fighting. She had followed him and the newswoman into the alley behind the *News* building, and she had ample opportunity to observe his typical newspaper prowess as he blusteringly terrorized the youngsters waiting for papers.

He had a crude but telling way of maintaining order. As he swaggered about, swearing and admonishing, he gave a kick here and a shove there, and, in a miniature way, acted towards the newsboys exactly as the Press acted towards the public, Joan thought, taunting them, filling them with fear of his power to crush them. They dared show nothing but a cringing respect for him, just as the intimidated public truckled to the tyrannical Press. It was as if he were the monster's shadow itself.

"Damn you," he said, cursing at a harmless little waif, "get in line."

His constant and lurid explosion of oaths appalled Joan.

"This is one of the kindergarten tutors of the most powerful educational institution in the world!" she thought.

Looking at his pupils as they smoked cigarettes and matched pennies, and listening to their thoughtless blasphemies, Joan considered the chances against them, and concluded that the devil could not do a more thorough job than this department of the Press was doing.

Soon she understood the source of some of the elderly newsman's vehemence. She saw him covertly take a small quantity of white powder from a little box and draw it up into his nostrils. The newswoman took some, too.

"Drug fiends!"

Joan shudderingly pitied them, and sitting down on a box there in the alley between them, drew from them fragments of their bitter experiences, aided by the stimulant they had taken.

III

"That's right. I am giving it to you straight. I might have been the editor of the *News* today. They'll tell you upstairs that I was one of the best reporters they ever had. But it got me, like it gets lots of them. Night work! Brain fag! Tobacco! Alcohol! More booze—finally dope—couldn't turn out the right kind of copy after a while—got notice—gave me this job—pays me just as well—I'm satisfied—eh, Nell?"

The newswoman brooded aloud over her own record, by way of reply. She was more vivid than the newsman. She evidently felt her position more keenly.

"It's hell, Bill; there's no satisfaction in it, and you know it," she replied. "You can forget. I can't. I can never forget. I'm living it over all the time."

She began to cry. The drug affected her that way. Joan put an arm around her and comforted her. Nobody had done that for years. Not even Bill. He looked at the gratitude welling up in Nell's eyes, then looked at Joan and realized that a simple little touch of nature had suddenly made the three of them pals. He softened perceptibly.

"She's a good scout, kid," he said to Joan. "Stick to her. This is new stuff to you, and she can help you—"

"I have been a reporter, too, just like you," Joan hastened to correct him.

"Ha, ha, that's a good one," roared Bill, and almost tumbled off the box, as he depreciatingly scanned Joan's diminutive form.

Nell examined Joan shrewdly through her tears.

"What's the big idea?" she asked.

"I worked for Keating," Joan quietly replied.

"He's a *Record* spy, Nell," Bill said. "Kid, you're in the wrong alley."

"I don't think so," protested Joan. "In fact I am sure I am just where I ought to be, sitting here between you two, and I am going to stay." That sounded authoritative and made an impression.

"Well, what's the game, kid? You're no infant. Let us in on it," answered Bill.

"Bill," Joan replied, with friendly presumption, "Nell says you are not satisfied with things as they are. That's right, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, the precocious kid's a nut, Nell. He's crazy. He's going to start a revolution," burst out Bill.

"Bill, you answer my question," insisted Joan, still treating him with innocent familiarity.

Bill was not accustomed to insistence. That was his own prerogative. He looked at Nell.

Nell felt Joan's arm still around her. Her eyes warned Bill that the kid had won her. Bill fancied that the kid was going to master him, too. To them the influence that Joan exerted upon them was strange but undeniable. They could not know, of course, that all the unconscious

power of her womanhood was enlisted in Joan's aid in this, her supreme effort for the cause which she had fantastically taken to her heart.

"Yes, that's right," Bill answered her.

"Well, Bill, that being the case, it's up to us men, you and me and the rest of us, to make things satisfactory not only to ourselves but to the women, like Nell here."

Joan's diplomatic assumption of Nell's co-operative sympathy elicited from the newswoman an eloquent and emotional endorsement of any attempt that might be proposed to undo the conditions that had brought her to where she was.

"Kid, I'm with you. Why shouldn't I be? Look at me! You wouldn't think it, but I used to be this city's biggest department store's star saleswoman."

She emphasized it, suspecting Joan would think the drug was making her exaggerate:

"That's the truth! They used to show me off as one of their handsomest. But I got tired of being paid in benevolence. I sided in with the girls who started a strike because they were compelled to stand on their feet all day for less than a living wage, and lend their good looks as well as their talents to luring thousands of women to squander their husband's hard-earned salaries."

"Legalized slavery," muttered Bill.

"I became a leader," continued Nell, "I appealed to the Press. To spoil my influence with the other girls the store's officials slandered me as an immoral person."

"More convenient than murder," interrupted Bill.

"Oh, they'll do anything! I was discharged. That gave the Press an opportunity for a nasty story about me. But I worked for the strike on the outside. Re-

porters followed me, every step I took. I was interfering with the affairs of the papers' largest benefactor. I was pursued with bitter vindictiveness. Because of the infamous story circulated about me they had me down and they daily trampled upon my face, my personality, my affairs, my supposed opinions. My suspected innermost thoughts became the subject of discourse and speculation upon the front pages of the papers. It became impossible for me to procure any kind of employment. So what was left to me? Do you think any man worth having would look at me to marry me, a notorious outcast? Well, that's what I became, eventually! And look at me now! Look at the pathos of it—the tragedy of it—actually compelled to try to get a living off the Press that ruined me! If that isn't hell, I can't imagine what is. Why shouldn't I be with you, kid, why shouldn't I?"

The reaction from the drug, and her agitated emotions, produced a convulsion of weeping. Bill got up, crossed over and sat beside her, and pacified her by putting his arm alongside of Joan's round her waist.

"I know, I know," he kept repeating. "But we can't stop the Press."

"We don't want to stop it. It is invaluable. It should be the bulwark of civilization. We want to make it that. We want to govern its vicious influence—" Joan started to say.

"We can't govern the governor of government," tersely interrupted Bill.

"We can try," persisted Joan.

"They will turn their batteries on you in a twinkling if you cross them," warned Bill. His words reminded Joan of Tom's similar caution.

The batteries of public opinion can be turned against them, too," responded Joan.

"How?" eagerly enquired Bill and Nell together.

"By the 'Army of the Victims of the Vicious Press'!" was the firm, unhesitating reply.

"And who will lead the 'Army'?" derisively enquired Bill, grinning broadly.

"I will, and you and Nell shall be my generals," decisively replied Joan.

"But the batteries?" blandly queried Nell.

"Banners," answered Joan, "delivering shots that will strike home—'News not Nuisance'—'Lift us up, Don't Drag us Down'—'We can make you Bigger if you will make us Stronger'—'We want to Love you instead of Hating you'—'You belong to us as much as we belong to you'—'If you can't see what is smouldering in our hearts you are doomed'—sugar-coated, peaceful protests, like that; nothing rebellious, not yet."

"March your crazy army and its batteries down Newspaper Row and stick 'em up in front of the Newspaper offices—that can be done—but you can't get your banners believed—that is, they won't make any impression on the Press—"

"Bill," interrupted Joan, "listen to me. You are a newspaper man, and so am I, and we both know this. We can take a space on the front page of tomorrow's *Record* and we can print on it 'Bill is our Best Citizen,' or some other lie,"—Bill roared—"and although most of those who read that will smile at it, some will believe it, and if you keep putting it there long enough, every day, everybody will believe that you are our 'Best Citizen,' Bill, even if you are not." Bill roared again. "That is the

power of propaganda, 'getting anything, even a lie, to be believed.' That's the power of the Press; that's a power which the masses have never dared, never attempted, to use. I agree with you that one or two banners might not influence a vicious newspaper; but a hundred or two hundred might, carried by the most pitiable of all the victims of the Press—by young girls—by ragged newsies —tiny little banners carried by infants in their mother's arms, pleading for a clean chance—scarlet banners carried by women branded by the Press—banners with a cross upon them carried by Christ's disciples struggling against devil-made convention—Oh! Yes, Bill, it can be done."

Bill suspected that he was witnessing a most prodigious kind of enthusiasm, and began to believe that possibly the thing could be done. Nell was certain of it.

"The Army of the Victims of the Vicious Press!" repeated Joan.

Bill laughed.

It sounded funny.

Nell frowned at him.

Joan repeated it again. "The Army of the Victims of the Vicious Press—that includes the three of us to begin with, doesn't it?"

Yes, it certainly did; whether they admitted it or not.

"It is no damn laughing matter," forcefully assented Nell.

The three enlisted.

The first offensive movement was scheduled for Thursday at noon.

Nell was commissioned to round up the female section of the procession of protest, with its banners.

Bill was commissioned to recruit the men.

Joan undertook to enlist the newsboys.

And as Nell beheld tough old Bill striding down the alley, betaking himself grimly off to his duty, looking as earnest as she had ever seen him look, and muttering curses against the Press as he went, she caught up in her arms the small little chap who had softened her man and kissed the little fellow on the lips.

IV

Joan began to clean up the alley's morals that same Monday night.

Her task of enlisting the "Newsies" got well under way within the hour. Bill came back shortly and walked up and down the alley with her several times—he a great big giant of intimidating brawn, she a frail little figure, red-cheeked and beautiful; and soon the newsboys could be heard saying:

"Here comes Bill and the Kid."

Joan moved about among the boys speaking very decisively. There was a brighter fire than ever in her eye, and a remarkably attractive dignity in her manner.

She gave orders, instead of asking questions.

"You are going to stop that swearing," she said to a newsboy whom she was instructing for his part in the Thursday demonstration."

"Why? I would rather go to—"

"Never mind where you would rather go. You are here now and you stop using that kind of language."

The hot desire which the "Kid" so quickly aroused in the newsboys to "hold a parade" won Bill's admiration. Before the night had far advanced he and Joan became

inseparable. He was so big, she so little, he was so far on in years, she was so young; he was so rough and brown, she was so fresh and childish; he was such an experienced old sinner, she was unsullied and childlike.

It was the oddest sort of an alliance, he thought.

He told her so.

"I don't know just what makes me fall so hard for you and your scheme, Kid."

The enchantress who lurks in every woman had him in thrall.

Joan was learning that the subtle feminine influence, even when hidden, works irresistibly. She replied:

"Did you ever hear tell of Joan of Arc?"

Bill said that he had.

"Well," continued Joan, "if a mere chit of a girl could wake up a whole nation and lead it to victory, don't you think a big strong man like you and a willing little chap like me, can start something of the same sort in this city, against a worse tyrant than hers?"

Bill said he thought that they could, and asked the "Kid" where he lived. There was not a very prompt response to that, so Bill tactfully added:

"There's room for you to bunk up over night in one of the news-trucks in the alley, if you like."

Joan thought that would be useful experience and safer than running the risk of being seen going into the loft, and acquiesced.

Bill watched his curious waif kneel down before cuddling up.

"A bit simple, I guess," he observed. His face sagged with sympathy.

"I am getting my army lined up, Joan of Arc," the

"Kid" prayerfully reported, and then quickly fell asleep.

V

Several hours later, at about two o'clock on Tuesday morning, as Tom Manly entered his apartment and stopped before his dressing-table, a picture of Joan on it arrested his attention.

He had treasured the photograph ever since it had been taken during their college days.

As he looked at it the lips of the smiling face moved and spoke to him:

"*News,* Mister," they softly pleaded.

Tom caught his breath.

"I knew I had heard that voice before; that newsie was Joan."

Quivering with excitement he reached for his telephone and called up Joan's home. A sleepy caretaker, resentful of being aroused at such an hour of the morning, curtly informed him that "Miss Joan didn't live there any longer." "Did he know where she could be found?" "No, she had gone away early in the morning."

Terrible things!

Too late! Too late to save her from terrible things—maddening things!

"Joan, Joan," he moaned, holding her picture in his hands. "Brave little Joan. I have the courage to do it now. You have shown me how to do it. I will find you, and tell you, and make you happy, as you asked."

He waited, sleepless, for the daylight to find her and tell her.

CHAPTER XIII

I

TOM, haggard from loss of sleep and worry over Joan's safety, hurried to the loft on Tuesday morning to await her arrival. He calculated that she had no other place to go. Suspicions of her destitution oppressed him, and his realization of her pluck shamed him. She was not there when he arrived, so he remained.

At eight o'clock Joan's original army of the neighbourhood's destitute dogs came scampering up the three flights of stairs, quietly, as they had been trained to do. Only the patter of their feet could be heard.

Joan was coming! Tom waited for her on the landing at the fourth floor.

As the dogs reached the top floor they stopped, huddled in a group for a moment.

Who was this intruder?

They sniffed the air. This was not Jerry. They did not know who he was. Therefore he had no business there, they decided. He might be intending to hurt Joan. So they would get him out of the way.

A medley of snarls developed instantly into a hubbub of barks, interspersed with such snapping of teeth that Tom, in a panic, indiscreetly took refuge on top of the balustrade, and yelled:

"Joan, Joan, call off your hounds, before they eat me alive!"

Tom's precipitate retreat, of course, drew the dogs on, and it began to look doubtful if there would be enough of him left to be of any help to Joan by the time she reached the top of the stairs.

Tom could hear her hurrying up.

What a fine sight for her he would be, treed on his uncomfortable and dangerous perch! She was bringing someone with her—several people.

This would never do. The editor of the *News* must not be caught in such a humiliating situation.

In desperation, he jumped off into the midst of the dogs, just as a group of *Record* newsboys, who had been standing downstairs in front of the *Record* building next door, attracted by the terrific barking upstairs, reached the landing on the fourth floor, and discovered the *Record*'s rival at bay, outside Joan's door.

What a fine story this would make for Keating, Tom thought, if any of the *Record* newsboys happened to recognize him!

The dogs beat a yelping retreat, and left the situation to terrified Tom and the grinning boys.

"Can't you git in, mister?" laconically enquired the bully who had sold Tom a *Record* last night and afterwards smashed Joan on the eye.

"I don't know that I'm trying 'to git in'," Tom retorted evasively. "Maybe I'm trying 'to git out'."

He walked down stairs with as much dignity as he could muster, strolled up the street a short distance to throw his audience off his track, and then returning, took up a position on the pavement, close to the doorway leading up to the loft, and waited for Joan.

In a few minutes Joan came round the corner from the alley behind the *News* building, on her way to feed the dogs and do a little doctoring to a certain black eye. She had decided to risk going up into the loft unseen.

Within a few feet of him she spied Tom waiting for

her, and darted into a doorway, her heart-a-flutter.

"Tom is looking for me. He ought to be in bed now. How pale and worn he looks! He expects me to go up into the loft. He will pry into my future plans. Determined Tom!"

She could have made him hear by whispering—he was so close.

"What would he think if he knew I was selling his papers? How would he feel about me being dressed like this? How would he like my black eye? What would he think about the 'Army of the Victims of the Vicious Press'? He would try to disband it. I must keep out of his way."

As she looked in Tom's direction she saw the *Record* bully, who had hit her, come out of the *Record* building. She winced at sight of him and drew farther back into the doorway. Joan thought he had a very suspicious grin on his face. She watched him take up a stand near the doorway to the loft, not far from Tom, where he kept a sly watch on Tom and on the loft entrance.

Her heart almost ceased beating.

Could it be possible that he had discovered her identity and was waiting there to finish his defeat of her? She felt like running.

Could Keating have penetrated her disguise and put the fellow on her trail? Was he going to watch for her all day and spoil her plans?

Or was the *Record* boy watching Tom, to find out what he was doing there?

Perhaps her imagination was needlessly alarming her.

She did not know what to think, but she did know that she was not safe where she was, so she slipped in

front of a pedestrian for a shield and went back to the alley with Bill, where she felt more secure.

II

Joan did not see the *Record* newsboy again all day. She kept to the alley for safety's sake, but began to cultivate a healthy determination to kick the bully's shins full of holes if he crossed her path. This determination actually grew into a desire as the day wore on, and she planned to sally forth at dark and take her chances with him if she encountered him.

But although she did not see the *Record* bully she did see Tom. He came out of the alley-entrance to the *News* building into the alley itself, and walked out through it into the street. She did not suspect that he could be looking for her there. But still it seemed strange that he should be in the *News* building during the day, because he regularly spent the night there, from six o'clock on.

"That's the editor of the *News*," Bill confided to her.

"Is that so?" replied Joan, "He is a very nice-looking man. It's too bad we must fight him." She did not think it prudent to explain her lesser antagonism to Tom's paper.

"He's looking for one of the newsboys," Bill informed her.

Joan trembled. How had he found out?

"Must be a new one. I know 'em all. Your name isn't John, is it?" Bill surveyed her intently.

In desperation, Joan denied that it was, and wondered how she could possibly elude Tom if he was determined to keep on her trail.

"Well, if you hear any of these kids calling somebody

'John,' send him up the alley entrance to the boss. He's got something coming to him, I reckon."

"All right, I'll send him up, Bill, she said aloud, and to herself added, "I'll send myself up by the front entrance, at noon the day after tomorrow, in broad daylight, at the head of my army, and, I don't like to do it, but he's one of those who will unexpectedly have something coming to him."

III

Joan kept making little speeches of confidence to herself all day long, and grew braver and braver in her attitude towards the *Record* bully and Tom. She was sure she would be defiant towards either of them should she meet them—after dark. But she kept to the alley during the day, rounding up her cohorts, and receiving reports from her generals.

"It's going to be the most spectacular parade this city has ever seen," Nell, informed her at five o'clock. "I've made the rounds of the department stores, seen my friends, put them quietly to work on the banners, and there'll be enough for everybody. It's a great idea to hold it at noon hour, when enough people are off work to take part in it and see it. And it's great that we're doing it quick. They won't have time to stop us. They'll hardly have time to find out what we are going to do. We are practically ready now. All that's necessary is for you to take your place at the head of the line and give the order to march."

Joan thanked God for sending her such an organizer as Nell, with the experience and bitterness of past strike-failures to guide her.

IV

"Bill," said Joan to her stalwart aide-de-camp, towards dusk on Tuesday, "I have some special friends whom I have been thinking about in connection with our parade the day after tomorrow, and I should like to have your advice about letting them take part."

"The more the merrier, Kid," replied Bill.

"They are a lot of dogs," Joan informed him.

"Dogs?"

"Yes, I raised and maintained a regular army of dogs before I ever thought of raising the 'Army of the Victims of the Vicious Press'."

Bill meditatively scratched his head and observed to himself: "Another army—of dogs? The Kid's dippy on armies." But he must humour her. Aloud he replied, "Dogs can't carry any banners."

"Well, I expect trouble, Bill, from one particular man. He is a very determined man. He always gets what he wants. I expect him to make a rush for me and grab me away from my place at the head of the procession. But I have an idea that if he sees my dogs around me he will think twice before he tries to get past them."

"Fetch 'em along," said Bill. "But had you forgotten that he will have to get past me?"

"Good old Bill," responded Joan. "You'll like my dogs, and I know they'll like you."

"All right," said Bill, "but I don't want to go in any circus parade with a lot of wild animals. This is a damned serious demonstration, and I am more determined that it shall succeed than your kind friend can possibly be to have it fail. I'll take particular delight in slaughtering him if he is a newspaper man."

"Very well, Bill, I won't bring the dogs," Joan hastened to conciliate him.

"Suit yourself, Kid, don't mind me," he answered, "but their being there to keep that fellow off will deprive me of the opportunity of making mincemeat out of him."

"On second thought, Bill, I believe I will bring the dogs," she said, remembering Bill's envy of Tom for holding what might have been his position, and realizing, with a surprising degree of solicitude, that she could never bear to have Tom harmed.

V

Tom left the *News* building in time to buy the papers at the corner shortly before six o'clock, in order to avoid encountering Keating. He calculated that Joan would be selling papers there again.

Joan did not appear.

The *Record* bully sold him a paper.

"Didn't you sell me a paper here at about this time yesterday?" Tom asked him.

"Yep."

"Do you remember what became of the lad who sold me a copy of the *News* at the same time?" enquired Tom.

"Yep, I punched him in the eye."

"What?" Tom wanted to take the bully by the neck, and with the greatest difficulty restrained himself.

"He can't sell his trashy paper on my corner."

Trashy!

So he edited trash!

Well, perhaps the same newsboy wouldn't sell his "trash" there on the corner any more, but some other boy would. Tom promised himself to see to that.

"Do you know where he is?" Tom enquired, expecting to be referred to some hospital.

"I ain't seen him today."

"If you see him again, I'd like you to let me know where he's selling papers now, since leaving your corner. You may see him yet, to-night. I'll drop back here in an hour to see you." Tom did not want the "newsie" to find out who he was by reporting to him up in his office. He gave him an extra coin.

When Tom had gone, the *Record* bully went across the street, entered the *Record* office, went upstairs and remained ten minutes or so before returning to the street. In an hour, Tom approached him on the corner.

"Ain't seen him yet," reported the *Record* newsboy.

"I'll be back again in an hour," said Tom, persistent in his efforts to find Joan, who was just then contemplating leaving the alley, under cover of the darkness.

Tom returned every hour until after midnight, without success.

Soon he would have to go home and get some sleep. His work for the night would shortly be over. He could do nothing more to find her until morning. He wrote a hurried note to her, gave it to the *Record* newsboy, and asked him to give it to the "other newsie" as soon as he saw him in the morning. Then he returned to finish his work in the *News* office and go home.

As soon as Tom had disappeared into the *News* building the *Record* newsboy took Tom's note over to the *Record* building and went upstairs with it.

VI

Although Joan came out of the alley and watched Tom

leave for his home before deciding to "bunk up" again in the truck, Tom went wearily home without seeing her.

It was after he had left the *Record* newsboy for the last time and had gone back to his office to finish his work, that Joan came out of the alley, still thinking solicitously about the chances of Bill injuring Tom during the Thursday demonstration.

Within less than an hour after she left the alley, Joan learned how far solicitude about a man may lead.

Her last great battle between her instinct and her feelings was fought on the kerb directly facing Tom Manly's office, in the early hours of the day preceding her demonstration against the press. Thinking of Tom, she walked directly to a point opposite the *News* Building, where she deliberately sat down in the darkness and gazed up at the brilliantly illuminated windows where Tom and his staff were finishing the morning edition.

Up there was her old class-mate, a successful man of the world. With him she had been trained to go through life on a plane level with his own. There he was, on top, wanting her; here she was, at the bottom, literally in the gutter, fighting him.

And yet her pity was for him, not for herself.

"I don't want to hurt you, Tom," she spoke upwards at the window to him. "But I must go through with this, even if it does hurt you."

Newspaper Row was very quiet. The city was sound asleep. Joan had never before been out so late. It seemed very peaceful. She thought of the calm before the storm. Only one straggling pedestrian slouched along behind her during the time she sat there, and even the drivers of the waiting delivery trucks were asleep on the seats; but up-

stairs in both newspaper offices the city's rulers were wide awake.

"Less than thirty-six hours left in your reign," Joan reflected, as she visualized the procession of protest which she would lead into Newspaper Row on Thursday at noon.

Bill by her side, and her dogs on leashes!

Then the newsboys, her own picked company!

After them Nell's brigade of the city's persecuted girls!

And at the end Bill's group of men, about which he had maintained an ominous secrecy!

Silently, at the stroke of twelve, the procession would move into Newspaper Row, with its banners, and quietly take up its position in front of the *Record* office.

Bill had significantly told her to "Watch the finish!"

She had gladly left Bill to his own discretion, up to the point of his possible attack upon Tom. But she felt she could not trust him to restrain himself when he learned that her opponent was the editor of the *News*. Tom would certainly be there. The newspapers could not be expected to be ignorant of the protest up to the last minute. It occurred to her to protect Tom by going right up to him, now, and warning him to take precautions.

She stood up to go.

The reporters would see her if she went up, and they might accomplish some interference with her plans!

She decided to stop Tom in the darkness, when he left the building to go home. She would save him if she could, little appreciating what she was about to precipitate upon him.

She sat down and kept thinking about him, while waiting for him to leave the building.

"I have been dodging you all day, Tom, and now I am waiting to see you," she said to herself. "You have been looking for me to protect me; now I am looking for you to protect you. We have been dodging each other this way a good part of our lives, haven't we?"

She began to speculate upon how other women would have changed Tom's policy by marrying him first and influencing him gradually. That would be their tactful solution of the problem. Incidentally, it would take care of the matter of their sustenance, and would bring them happiness. It would, indeed, make them very happy, provided they successfully swayed him.

She looked at her apparel, appraised her few assets, thought of her absolute loneliness in the world, calculated the possibility of the failure of her demonstration, and decided that ninety-nine women out of one hundred would marry Tom under the circumstances.

"And I am so strange that I could never marry him. I like him. I want to help him. I would not for the world have him harmed—much less bring harm to him; but love him—marry him—never—"

At this moment Tom appeared in the doorway on his way home.

"Providential," she murmured.

She stood up again.

Bill and Nell called to her from behind. A group of newsboys got in her way. Hundreds of dejected girls and women and men pleaded against her going, with their sorrowful eyes.

"I cannot have him harmed," she remonstrated. "I must warn him. Bill will kill him."

"You are capitulating to convention in the very hour of

your triumph over it," rebuked a feeble little voice inside. "You have yielded so far that only a miracle of courage can save you now."

Tom passed up the street, wearily trudging along. She could see that he was very tired. Helplessly she watched him and let him go.

Then she sat down, in an agony of doubt and indecision.

"What have I done?" she muttered. "What am I doing, most of the time—I don't seem to know—"

Behind her, the *Record* bully who had given her her black eye came out of the *Record* building, walked quickly to where she was sitting, handed her Tom's note and disappeared.

Joan opened the folded sheet of paper and read:

"J. will you please see me immediately?"

She had told him "to let her know"!

Was he letting her know? Was he going to save himself, as she had begged him to do? Was he wanting to help her with her demonstration against the vicious Press?

Question upon question pressed for answer.

She had never before in her life received a note from Tom Manly.

It came to her at the weakest and most hazardous moment of her life—came to her tottering on the verge of madness—came to her feeling her need of a protector.

She had risen to her feet after reading it, and stood staring in the direction taken by Tom. It occurred to her that she might be able to overtake him.

In a moment she was hurrying after him in the dark.

At the corner her haste almost cost her her life. One

of the big newspaper trucks rolled noiselessly out of the alley behind the *Record* building, without any lights, and almost ran her down in the dark. The narrow escape took away her breath, and made her lose her chance of overtaking Tom. When she had composed herself, she hurried along as fast as her feet could carry her, but she was nearly a whole block behind him when he turned from the street to enter his apartment.

When Joan arrived there a few moments later he had disappeared within.

It was two o'clock on Wednesday morning.

She stood looking at the closed door.

Two men were coming down the street, approaching her.

They could attack or overtake her, within a block, if they desired.

It was a long way back to Bill and the truck in the alley.

Could she trust her disguise to protect her from the men?

She had trusted it in broad daylight.

But in the middle of the night, beset with many fears, Tom's hallway seemed to offer greater security.

As the men drew closer to her she ran up the steps and took refuge in the vestibule.

CHAPTER XIV

I

PEERING through the glass door, waiting for the two men to pass, Joan in terror watched them turn from the pavement at the foot of the steps and start to walk up after her. In the darkness she seemed to see that one of them carried a dark object in his hands, and the other appeared to have a short stick raised up above his head, as if ready to strike a blow.

In consternation, Joan pressed the bell-button and rattled the door, which was instantly opened by Tom in his bath-robe, just as the two men reached the outside vestibule door.

"Joan!" Tom cried pityingly, touched to the depths of his heart by the spectacle of her standing there in the gloom, drooping, tattered, come to him at last. Overwhelmed with emotion, he reached out towards her.

"Tom!" she cried, and rushed for protection through the open door into his arms.

There was a flash, and a loud report!

Joan trembled. Was she being shot?

She turned in Tom's arms to look at the two men—one with the short uplifted stick, the other with the dark object held in front of him. As she turned, there came again the blinding flash right in her startled eyes, and another muffled report.

Tom switched on the light.

Worse than being shot! Infinitely more diabolical than murder!

There in the open doorway stood Keating's photographer, camera in hand, Keating himself still holding

the flash-light stick aloft, behind them the young *Record* bully coming up the steps, and just rolling up at the kerb the big *Record* truck that had barely missed running over Joan.

And on the camera plates, two convicting photographs!

One depicting the illustrious editor of the *News,* in his bathrobe, embracing a young woman in newsboy's attire in his room at night, with all the emotion of which his heart was capable showing on his face!

The other picture revealing both of them startled and chagrined at being discovered.

Freedom of the Press!

II

When Joan had sold Keating a newspaper on Monday evening, his inscrutable eyes had concealed two things, his recognition of Joan and his observation that Tom Manly gave no outward evidence of recognition of her.

He had come upon some kind of newspaper plot!

Tom Manly and Joan were unitedly up to something that could not be expected to do the *Record* any good, he suspected.

From that moment Joan's movements were followed.

The "Army of the Victims of the Vicious Press" had hardly been projected before the fact was known in the *Record* office. The demonstration engineered by Joan dressed up as a newsboy, presumably with the knowledge of the editor of the *News,* was obviously aimed at the *Record.* The *Record* would watch developments and handle the situation in its own typical way.

When the *Record* bully reported to the *Record* office on Tuesday morning that the editor of the *News* had been

treed on a balustrade by a lot of dogs, on the fourth floor of the loft building next door, he never suspected that Manly was waiting for the newsboy whose eye he himself had blackened; but the day-editor of the *Record* noted another link in his chain of evidence, and directed the *Record* newsboy to take up his position downstairs, outside the loft building, to watch the movements of the editor of the *News* and report them as they occurred. His satellite obediently tracked his quarry throughout the day.

When the editor of the *News* paid the *Record* bully to find the newsboy whose eye he had blacked, that request was revengefully reported to the office of the *Record.*

When Tom's note was entrusted for delivery to Joan, it was first of all taken up to Keating, where its contents strengthened the evidence of the suspected plot and suggested the method of neutralizing it.

Keating shrewdly calculated that Joan would go to Tom upon receipt of the note. But instead of having her go to him in his office, it was necessary for his purpose that she should be induced to go to him at his home. The *Record* bully reported that she was in the alley behind the *News* building. Keating watched out of the window for Tom Manly to start home before he had the note delivered to Joan in the alley. Then Joan helped his plan by coming out of the alley, shortly before Tom left, and taking up her position on the kerb. When she was gazing after Tom, Keating tempted her, with Tom's note, to follow him. When she started after Tom, Keating drove out of the alley behind the *Record* building with his photographer and the *Record* newsboy, in the truck that almost ran over Joan at the corner, and in a roundabout

way proceeded one block beyond Tom's apartment, where Keating and his photographer left the truck, planning to effect an entrance to Tom's apartment while Joan was with him, walked down the avenue towards Joan standing alone at two a. m., in front of Tom's door, unexpectedly scared her into his vestibule, pursued and crowded her into his presence, snapped the incriminating photographs, and stood for a moment grinning over their accomplishment and enjoying the discomforture of their victims, before rushing the waiting truck back to the *Record* office with a choice bit of delightfully scandalous material for the morning edition, which was being held to receive it.

"This," chuckled Keating to himself, "supplies the second exposure in the morning edition that will interest the people of this city."

III

Keating's mouth was twisted in a derisive smile.

"Quite an edifying scene," he sneered, gloating over his conquest. "How shall we head it? 'At Home with Editor Manly's Lady Newsboy', might do."

Tom quivered under the murderous impulse surging within him.

"Gawd! Is the Kid a girl?" ejaculated the *Record* bully. Such sweet revenge!

Joan had a mental vision of the effect of the rowdy's information when conveyed with boorish raillery to the newsboys in the alley. It would mean the end of tomorrow's demonstration. She had been counting on the public protest to bear more heavily upon the *Record* than upon the *News*. She was now determined that it should.

Keating's intrusion was welding her to Tom. She was holding his trembling hand and pressed it, to comfort and calm him. It had not dawned upon her that Keating was going to print the picture of herself and Tom. Soon enough he enlightened her.

"Manly," he sneered, "I know all about the plot against the *Record* concocted by you and your lady friend here—"

"He has nothing to do with my plans," interrupted Joan in defence of him.

Keating ignored her.

"I am not particularly anxious to publish this exposure of you and your private life in our paper this morning. I would rather hold it over you, to use at some future date if you again forget that it is not good newspaper business to start an attack upon your competitor. It will come in handy. I prefer, for the present, to hold up publication of this material while you call off your demonstration against the *Record* scheduled for tomorrow."

"He has no part in my demonstration, I tell you," Joan protested.

"Oh, of course not," sneered Keating. "It is quite likely isn't it, that you should be carrying on a love intrigue with the editor of the *News* and not have his support?"

Tom's restraint was giving way. The need to kill was strong within him. Joan saw murder gleaming in his eyes. Weakly realizing that she must try to stave off the catastrophe, she moved almost in front of him.

"What is your proposal?" she demanded of Keating.

"You will sign this to be sent to your partners in the alley," coldly replied Keating, handing her a prepared statement and a pen.

Joan read one copy and put the other into Tom's twitching fingers.

"Bill: Call off the Protest. I shall not be back."

Joan paled, steadied herself, and looked into Tom's murderous eyes.

If she did not send this to the alley Keating would print the photographs. Tom would intercept him before he moved; but nothing, not even the murder of Keating could save them from ruin by the *Record's* exposures.

On the other hand, if she did send it, the protest was impossible; the *Record* would hold the whip-hand over Tom and the *News,* and her life's fight against the dynasty of convention was at an end.

No matter what she did, she had brought disgrace to Tom, whose advice she had never heeded, and she had added a final failure to her dismal record of defeat.

Convention and the *Record* had won.

Mercilessly accussing thoughts of self-reproach obsessed her.

Terrifying hallucinations of Tom's voice scolding her: "I told you so."

Haunting echoes of Jerry's cry of despair: "What more could I do?"

Bitter realization of the hopelessness of opposition to the vicious Press!

Tragic consequences of her woman's effort to do the work of a man!

Humiliating memories of her argument with the Rector: "Be and remain true to that which it is a good woman's stupendous privilege to be—a woman.... A woman functions normally and best by influence, rather than by direct action."

Crushing reproach of her refusal to influence and work through Tom!

Appalling intimations of the fulfilment of the Rector's prediction: *"The penalty for oddness is dementia."*

Horrorstricken, in the depths of despair, she signed her disastrous abdication with her alley name of "Kid."

"Take this to Bill in the alley," Keating instructed the *Record* rowdy, handing him Joan's surrender.

To the photographer he said:

"Tell the night editor to hold up this story, but to run the other story, as planned."

Joan dimly wondered, "what other story?"

Tom still stared at Keating with a wild fury in his eyes.

As the photographer and newsboy turned to the waiting truck, Keating, looking into Tom's menacing face, called to them:

"If I am not back at the office in half an hour print both stories. Before I return I have some things to say to Mr. Manly which I think his companion will be interested to hear."

Keating viciously surveyed his victim.

Manly's eyes were no more menacing than his.

Keating was plainly unafraid.

His attitude was that of the man conserving his power; withholding his ammunition.

Joan tottered between the two antagonists in momentary peril of collapse, wanting to protect and fight for Tom, fearful of intensifying Keating's vengeance.

As a deliberate act of seeming caution, rather than fear, Keating left the front door wide open behind him. Barely the length of their arms separated the two men. They

could wildly reach each other's throats in an instant.

Through the open door the night's chill air blew idly in, unable to cool the fires of hate that burned in their hearts. Outside, and beyond, on all sides, their subjects lay peacefully sleeping, while the masters of their thoughts, controllers of their conduct, custodians of their welfare, temporal and even eternal, savagely faced each other with the venom and fury of wild beasts.

"Thus," had written poor Larry, "newspapers quarrel, grinding down innocent men and women in their complicated assaults upon one another; while the public ignorant of the motives behind their warfare, passively tolerates their savagery and eventually imitates it.

Civilization!

CHAPTER XV

I

"YOU look as if you wanted to kill me," sneered Keating.

His insolence was maddening.

"You haven't it in you to do it," he continued tauntingly.

Was the man inviting annihilation?

Manly uttered no word. Joan tightly held his hand.

Was Keating calculating that Manly was too shrewd to kill him?

Was Manly plotting a more potent retaliation than murder?

"You deceive yourself, and her, that it is her humiliation which angers you."

"Let him rave," Joan whispered.

Keating heard her, and said:

"Don't be so solicitous about him. He hasn't been about you."

Joan felt the shackles of the bondage of imbecility tightening around her.

"I don't mind telling you, Manly, that your wild eyes don't scare me a bit," Keating continued. "I am not afraid of a traitor like you, and I am not afraid to tell you that I am here to-night to fight you and your paper out of existence. This woman who thinks she holds you from harming me is going to loathe you in the next ten minutes. I am going to drive a knife so sharply between the pair of you that your dirty plots against my paper, and the various campaigns against the "Freedom of the Press," hatched up in the loft next door to the *Record*

office, will be ended. You have the chance to stop me before I start, if you dare!"

Manly stared.

Keating waited a moment, then continued:

"Thirteen days ago you bowed to this girl and her former lover at the street corner where we have been meeting at six o'clock, and at the same time handed out to me some bait about Englin's plan to "multiply the power of the Press." You thought it was very cleverly done. You calculated that it would lead me into an attack on Englin. And it did. But you didn't figure that the consequences would involve so much fatality. You didn't care, as a matter of fact, because you were actuated by the most unscrupulous of all motives. You planned to have me do the dirty work of attacking Englin and getting rid of him so that you could thereby take this girl away from him—"

"Prove it!" gasped Joan, urged now herself to spring at Keating's throat.

Keating continued to ignore her, and lashed his victim mercilessly.

"You successfully tempted me to publish next morning an attack on Englin, while at the same time you published some bunk about wirelss telephony to make him, and especially the girl, believe you were friendly to Englin, though you were actually inducing me to belittle him for you—"

"That proves nothing," put in Joan.

Keating paid no attention to the interruption.

"While my paper pursued its policy of attacking Englin, as one plotting against our business, your paper kept silence. Was this because you believed the *Record's* at-

tacks on Englin to be just or because you wanted the girl to imagine you were not inimical to him? You couldn't condemn him and please her, could you?"

"If the *News* had defended Jerry, your paper's attacks would have been intensified," answered Joan.

Keating still ignored her, and flung another bitter taunt at Tom.

"Why didn't you, at your age, go to the Front?"

"Didn't you read the account of his intended departure, printed on the evening of the first announcement of the armistice? He didn't have to go after that," Joan continued, unchecked in her defence of Tom.

"Oh yes, I read it," Keating said replying to her for the first time. "He didn't go because he feared Englin would get you while he was gone. That was the quality of his patriotism! And when, on November 8th, the advance rumours about the surrender began to trickle in on the wires, and there was no likelihood of his having to go, he took the chance of slapping into his paper that eulogistic notice concerning himself being about to go which he ripped out an hour later, when the people began celebrating the evident certainty of the impending armistice—after he had made a record of his unselfish patriotism for the attention of his friends."

Joan looked at Manly. He no longer stared. Like a prisoner at the bar he stood mute, with downcast eyes, submissive to his judge's scathing denunciation of him.

Keating went unsparingly on with his flogging.

"When Englin fled, effectually disgraced, through your marvellously clever use of the *Record* to expose him and get rid of him, it was your voice that told me over the telephone that he had disappeared. You thought I did

not recognize you. I didn't at first. But I did after you had abruptly hung up, and I recognized your motive, too, in wanting him to be as quickly as possible condemned in the *Record* columns to eternal obloquy, so as to make room for yourself with the girl; and I played up to your dirty game, and damned him as you wanted him damned, not to please you and help your scheme, but because I hated him for his plotting against the Press."

Joan bewildered stumbled away from Manly and sank into a chair, while he mechanically stalked across the room to the telephone, sat down beside it, and waited for Keating to finish.

The room and its contents began to swim in Joan's vision. Deliriously and dimly, she seemed to see two snakes coiled and striking at each other, while people round about cowered, trembling from fear that the venomous fangs would strike in their direction. Faintly she heard a hissing voice:

"You put Pogo's wench into the Church to desecrate it, as a means of helping you on with your conquest of the girl. Your paper, that might have helped the Rector and his daughter, and saved them, if you believed in them, damned them and suffocated them with silence, deliberately—"

"No, no! Not that! Not deliberately!" Joan seemed to hear herself protesting, as it was astoundingly being revealed to her that Tom Manly had fallen a victim to the "Press-promoted passivity" for which he was largely responsible. "Concoctor of conventional cowardice," Larry had alliteratively denounced him, "propagator of popular practice"—"supporter of servile submission to things as they are"—she realized that he had been con-

sistently and fatally controlled by the very rules of expediency which he had helped to set up, in place of the dictates of conscience.

The hissing voice continued:

"When I took the girl into my employ, you knew I didn't do it on her merit as a newspaper writer. But you let it go at that. You calculated it would help to wear her down and subject her to your designs upon her. And after I verified my suspicions of her, by catching her in the very act of trying to wreck my paper, it was no additional surprise to find you playing up to her newsboy scheme, pretending not to recognize her at the corner, and having her come to you by your tricky note. It's a nice piece of work, Manly—taking her from Englin, using her in your paper's interests against me—it's a good story—"

The room began fantastically to revolve round Joan with a swift whirling motion that seemed to form a circular dish with blurred objects in it—a sort of round nest—a nest, that was it—a nest of snakes darting and biting at each other with the quickness of lightning flashes. She crouched back in a corner out of their way. The sight of them was appalling; the stench was sickening. She could not stand it. She would have to get out. With a tremendous effort she tried to pick her way to an opening. The centre of the nest wavered beneath her weight.

"Alley?" Did she hear some one say "alley?" Yes, she was sure she heard a voice:

"Don't you dare go back to the alley," it said.

Another tremendous effort—she was out of it—out into the warm rain—no, not rain—piteous delusion—tears!—streaming upon her—hot tears furrowing her cheeks, draining her heart of all but its last bit of strength,

blinding her completely and beating her down to the ground.

II

"She's gone," said Keating, triumphantly.

Manly stood up and stared out through the open door. His face was livid.

"You let her go," Keating sneered at him. "I've divided the pair of you, made her despise you, and put you with your newspaper under my thumb, as I told you I would do. I call it a good night's work. Now I am going back to the office to report that you didn't murder me, and then I am going home to bed to dream about how much older and wiser a newspaper man is the editor of the *Record* than the editor of the *News,* while you sit here plotting how you are going to retaliate by annihilating me in your paper tomorrow. Go ahead! But don't forget that I hold a couple of interesting photographs of your private life to reveal if you go too far! And meantime buy the morning *Record* and learn from a certain bit of interesting news in it that it does not pay to interfere with the 'Freedom of the Press.' Good night."

He walked calmly out and shut the door behind him.

III

When the executioner had departed, his victim, coming to life, feebly lifted the telephone receiver off the hook and called up the office of the *News.*

"I neglected, before I left, to tell the night staff to be on hand an hour earlier this evening. See that they are told," he nervously ordered.

"It's half-past two, and everyone has gone for the night," replied his assistant.

"Call them all up and tell them," said Manly.

"Right," answered the assistant, remarking to himself as he made the memorandum: "Some big story must be going to break tonight. I wonder who's going to be exposed now?"

Tom Manly rushed wildly out into the darkness to find Joan.

CHAPTER XVI

I

THE little form that had deliriously found its way back to the alley before it collapsed beside Bill's truck, was discovered by him late in the morning huddled in a heap.

Unconsciousness had yielded to sleep when Bill tenderly picked Joan up, trying to avoid awakening her, and laid her in the truck.

The *Record* bully had duly spread the news that the Kid was a girl. Bill realized it the instant that he heard the tale, and understood then why he had been so strongly attracted to her from the first.

Joan stirred in Bill's arms, and tried to speak. It was only a feeble murmur.

"They warned me not to come back to the alley, but there was no place else to go except—" she intended to say "the loft," but sank deliriously into sleep again, as Bill gently placed her on the floor of the truck and smoothed back her hair.

Instantly Joan of Arc entered the fatal cart of execution with her, lifted her up, and said softly:

"Joan."

She gazed at her guardian with a wan little smile, and answered meekly:

"You have something to tell me?"

"Yes, Joan, if thou canst bear it."

Joan did not answer at once. No. She did not think she wanted to hear any more.

The Rector's sympathetic voice encouraged her.

"Be brave, Joan," he urged.

She turned from his strong face to her guardian angel, strengthened, and answered:

"Yes, I will hear it."

"I am come to be with thee at the end, Joan."

It was then that Bill felt her little body twitch beneath his hand, which protectingly caressed her. And he thought he heard her whisper:

"The procession, you mean?"

Trinity chimes began to toll the hour of noon.

"Yes," mumbled Bill, "tomorrow at this hour."

"Thy triumphal procession to thy reward," The consoling words of the Angel fell softly on Joan's ears.

"My reward—for failure?" she gasped.

"Thy reward, Joan, but not for failure—blessed martyrdom!"

Bill felt a spasm convulse the limp little body in his arms.

"When?" pleaded Joan.

Trinity chimes tolled the last stroke of twelve.

"Now, Joan, now. Look, we are on the way."

She began to sob in her sleep, and moan, and twist first one way, then another.

Bill could hardly endure it. For an instant he turned away, with the tears welling up in his eyes. Then he was quickly on his knees beside her, soothingly muttering:

"There, there—"

And then the violent sobs that shook her body grew less and ceased. The Spirit of Joan of Arc had shown the little Joan the shining badge around her forehead—the badge that glistened like the sun as her guardian angel unbound it and pointed to its golden lettering:

"Protester—Dissenter."

Proudly she helped to deck her brow again with the emblem of her honour—proud indeed to proclaim to all the world her dissention, her protestation against the evil might of Convention.

Convention—that now would wreak its vengeance on her, blazoning abroad its unassailable supremacy.

The very trappings of the horses that drew the cart were stamped and decked with a colossal "C", and the banners of the guards along the route flaunted it boldly. But here and there behind the guards she saw the banners of her "Army of the Victims of the Vicious Press," and behold, held firmly back by the sabres of the tyrant's forces, she glimpsed thousands upon thousands of her cohorts, stretching far away into the depths of the city. Sad and singular spectacle! There to honour her, though powerless to protect.

As the cart turned into Newspaper Row and paused in front of the newspaper offices, Tom Manly, with ghastly face and dishevelled hair tore frantically through the mob, and flinging himself upon his knees beside the cart, threw up his hands to her and piteously pleaded:

"Forgive me, Joan, forgive me!"

And out of her aching heart she forgave him, and in an infinite compassion bent down and told him that she understood that it was not he, but only the poor weaker side of him, trammelled by Convention, caught in the toils of popular practice, that had schemed and plotted so to seize her.

Midway between the two newspaper offices had been erected a platform, and the stake at which she was to suffer.

Keating, Pogo and a band of business men of the city

mercilessly judged her. Short shrift from such as these.

"Protest against Convention is futile."

The mandate of the judges, pronounced by one of their minions, typical in the hideously familiar eyeshade of the reporter, cut clear and sharp into the tense silence.

"Disssent from common practice is destructive of the common good. Protesters and dissenters must be destroyed, to prevent their destruction of what is best for all."

And with the words:

"So perish all the enemies of the Press," he delivered her to her executioner, behind whose mask glittered the venomous, gloating eyes of Keating, her arch-enemy.

Joan looked beseechingly around for friends. There, close by her side, stood the serene form of Joan of Arc, and near at hand were Margaret and her father, proudly erect, and comforting and encouraging her with their eyes.

And, as she looked, Jerry came and stood beside her.

Wistful, gentle Jerry.

"Jerry!" she breathed.

A world of love in the single word—an ecstacy of contentment! She smiled radiantly at him through her blinding tears.

His dear eyes were worshipping her again. She could read them so distinctly.

"Give her strength to be a woman," they were saying.

"Oh, Jerry, how could I," she pleaded, "how could I without you?"

She stretched out her hands to him.

"I needed you, Jerry," she chidingly sobbed, "I needed you ever so much more than I knew—how could I do

anything except through you—taking you away took everything that the woman who loved you needed to have, Jerry—needed to have to be a woman—to do as you wanted me to do—to do my work through another—through you—to be normal—natural—right-minded—Jerry—can't you see that, Jerry?—took away my reason—see—I can't even think right any more—without you—Jerry!" She pressed her hands to her eyes. "And I want to, so much, Jerry, I want to be just as you want me to be—and you can make me so, Jerry—you can bring back everything to me—oh, dear Jerry, I must be with you—"

His eyes were compassionately answering her—telling her that she would come to him instantly through her martyrdom. Joan of Arc was telling her, too.

"Must I, Jerry?" the frail mortal in her pleaded, as he helped the little form to mount the scaffold to the stake and the faggots that awaited her.

"Yes, Joan," she heard him tenderly answer her, shielding from the stare of the mob her little limbs so soon to be encircled by the flames.

"I will go, Jerry," she said submissively, striving to hide her limbs by pulling down her jacket over her newsie's knickers, as if by a final feminine instinct. "You wait here, just in front of me, so that I may see you to the end."

She placed her back against the stake and gazed down into his worshipping eyes. Then she saw Keating mount up to the top of the scaffold beside her and set to his task. Around her neck she felt him fasten a thick rough rope, twisted and knotted, chafing her delicate skin and twining round it like an earthworm round a flower. Then

around her slender body he wound chains that would hold her fast throughout her fiery ordeal, till, vanquished finally, she won her freedom from their fetters.

Just before he touched the torch to the faggots, she heard Keating call up to her:

"Will you conform to Convention, Joan?"

The tones of his voice were kindly, and for the first time he called her by her name. He had a gentle and plaintive accent which contrasted sadly with the haughty harshness of his features.

But Jerry's eyes spoke courage to her heart, in the last torment of temptation, and she called out loudly:

"Let me die!"

II

"No! No! No! No!" exclaimed Bill, answering her loud cry, chafing her hands and rudely arousing her from her delirious sleep.

She raised her eyelids, looked at Bill, then closed them again suddenly—wanting to see Jerry.

"Where am I, Bill?" she asked, later, mistily recognizing him through her tears.

"In the alley, in the truck, in my arms."

"Are you sure, Bill?" she asked faintly.

"Quite sure, little lady."

"Oh!—I—thought I was with—somebody else."

"Would you prefer to be?" he questioned, hanging upon her answer. She sat up, and patted his arm.

"You know you have been calling his name," he told her.

"Jerry?" she enquired.

Bill solicitously nodded his head.

"Next to him, Bill, you have a terribly big place in my heart—but you see, he used to have the whole of it—you would have understood if you had known him—and the memory of him and the hurt of never being able to have him will always be there. It has affected me a bit, Bill. I'm not just as I ought to be."

Bill understood. He knew that. He did not need to be told. He had known it all along. His silence now as much as said so.

"You see, I have got to be with him to grow better, Bill," she explained. "No one else, not even you, Bill, will do. I have got to die to be with Jerry—"

Bill looked anxiously up the alley for Nell.

Joan began to fumble nervously with the newspapers lying in the truck.

"What is it, little girl—what is it you want?" Bill asked.

"His picture—I used to have it—maybe there's one in the paper—there was one in it once," she ravingly prattled.

She pressed one of the papers to her bosom, as if it were Jerry's picture. It was the *Record*. She did not want that vicious thing near her. She threw it from her. It fell open by her side. There on its front page was the "other story" that Keating had vindictively promised.

"Bill—Bill," she cried, "am I wandering—am I reading it right?"

Bill, ignorant of its significance to her, read the headline to ease her:

"Electrical Englin Arrested."

Joan hysterically clutched Bill's arm, pulled herself up on her knees beside him and read on:

"Jerry Englin arrested at instigation of the 'Record' for violating War Regulations governing wireless. Recent tinklings of city telephone bells due to his experiments, which set up electrical interferences. Caught last night in his loft laboratory. Now in city jail, etc., etc."

Joan's poor head swayed helplessly upon her overburdened shoulders, as she sagged down against Bill.

The gigantic crushing mass of her crowning sorrow fell like stone upon her!

At last the uttermost depths of despair!

The tragic climax of her unconventional career!

Before her yawned her bottomless abyss!

Poised on the brink, before her leap, she dimly discerned and surveyed in its depths the frightful ruins of the struggle with the vicious Press.

Margaret and her father in their graves!

Larry in the asylum!

The Church ridiculed!

The book shop ruined!

Tom Manly corrupted!

Herself disgraced, deserted, abandoned to a life of horrible memories!

Jerry in prison!

And she could have intercepted him, during the night, she bitterly realized—the lone pedestrian who passed unrecognized behind her in the darkness at one o'clock in the morning—probably on the way back to the loft to get some of his equipment—while she sat looking up from the kerb at Tom's window!

But now he was locked in a felon's cell, and the *Record* could be counted upon to keep him there.

While Keating would continue to prosper and Pogo would continue to prosper and Peggy would continue to prosper!

And the *Record* would remain supreme over the *News!*

With Keating triumphant over Manly!

And convention vanquishing idealism!

Jerry's sacrifice of love in vain!

Her own conscientious fidelity to instinct unrequited!

Everything dear to her destroyed!

In all the range of the expressions of human emotion there was left to her no rational outlet for the misery of her soul.

Childishly clasping Jerry's headline in the *Record* to her bosom, she crumpled up, unconscious and deliriously crooning in Bill's arms.

The little mother of the tea-shop—mad!

III

Around her an instant later crackled the flames as they began to ignite the faggots piled beneath her stake.

Distress shone in her eyes—for Jerry.

She had begged him to stand where she might see him to the end. But the flames were reaching him quickly.

"Save yourself, Jerry," she shrieked pitifully.

Then a wreath of pitchy black smoke, interspersed with livid flames, shut him from the sight of her tear-filled eyes, and strangled her as the tongues of flame leapt to her unsullied body.

CHAPTER XVII

I

BILL sent hurriedly for Nell and together they worked over Joan in an effort to restore her to consciousness. Bill's part was mainly patrol work, keeping the curious newsboys away from the truck, while Nell's maternal spirit arose and helped out in the vital emergency as she ministered to Joan in the way that only women can care for one another.

Poor Bills' eyes blinked mistily, and his big heart was breaking with its mixed feelings of sorrow for Joan and hatred for the vicious Press. Joan's merit and pluck, and her importance as revealed by the *Record* bully's narration of the oppressive attention accorded to her by the *Record* overnight, raised her in his heart from the level of sympathy to the pinnacle of his most profound reverence. Bill began to feel that he would gladly die for Joan if she could be saved and enabled to go on with her fight.

"Is she any better, Nell?" he solicitously enquired, peering over the side of the truck.

At last he heard Joan's voice asking feebly:

"Is that Bill?"

He leapt up beside her. Nell was bathing her temples with cold water. Her poor little lips trembled, as her eyes, big with fright, recognized him. She spoke to him:

"Bill, let me stay right here, in the alley, with you and Nell—don't take me away."

Her eyes closed heavily again while she was looking at him.

"Is she gone, Nell? he sobbed.

"Sleeping, Bill. She's gone to sleep. It isn't unconsciousness now," Nell reassured him.

Bill almost laughed in his relief.

"That's good—that's good," he kept repeating, "and she stays right here, Nell, you understand? What she says goes! She stays right—"

He caught sight of the *Record* bully who had blackened her eye, peering into the truck with the newsboys who had crowded up.

"You damned rascal," he shouted, as he gritted his teeth and jumped over the side, pursuing the terrified lout like a fiend, until he had come close enough to him to land a demolishing kick, when he let go with all his weight behind the blow, missed, and came down on his back, as the bully disappeared in the crowd.

Picking himself up, and turning back up the alley toward the truck, he saw Tom Manly come through the alley-exit from the *News* building and walk toward the truck. Bill made for him on the run. He felt an impulse to smash his doubled fist against every newspaper official in the city. The editor of the *News* saw him coming, turned back with as much dignity as he could command in the small period of time allowed to him, gained the door of the *News* building ahead of Bill and shut it in his face.

A few minutes later, after Bill had returned to his station beside the truck, Tom Manly slipped out into the alley, unnoticed by Bill, approached a group of newsies near the door and enquired:

"What's going on in the truck?"

"Sick newsie," they told him. "Goin' to die."

He started down towards the truck. Bill saw him coming. Manly put up his hands to arrest attention. For answer, Bill let out a volley of oaths and advanced menacingly.

"It's a world of hellish torment, I say, and it's devils of newspaper men like you who are constantly making it more miserable instead of better! I'll work for none of you any longer."

Tom Manly raced for his life back behind the protecting door.

From time to time during Wednesday afternoon the editor of the *News* came to the alley door and looked down in the direction of the truck securely guarded by Bill, wholly unconscious, of course, of the extreme seriousness of its occupant's condition. Scrutinizing him from a distance, Bill thought he had grown older during the day. He had thought the same thing about him when he had seen him searching up and down the alley the preceding day.

II

Upstairs in the editorial rooms of the *News* there was tense excitement. An important meeting of both morning and afternoon staffs had been scheduled to be held late in the afternoon, before work was commenced on the morning edition. During the day, as on the day preceding, reporters noticed that serious and confidential conferences were being held between the editor and his assistants. It was rumoured that the preparations and the meeting had to do with an overwhelming attack upon the *Record*.

As the time for the scheduled staff-meeting drew near,

suspense over what might be the projected exposures of the *Record* affected the conversations of the waiting writers. A remark of one of them, looking across the street at the camp of Keating, typified the thoughts in the minds of all:

"I shouldn't like to be in your position, tomorrow," he said.

When the combined meeting of the staff was called to order, much as a general would gather around him his assistants preparatory to an attack, the editor of the *News* presented the anxiously anticipated material for the morning's sensational revelations in the form of two astounding articles, which took away the breath of the members of the staff to whom they were passed for criticism, correction and approval.

Just at this moment Bill was looking up from the alley at the brilliantly illuminated editorial floor of the *News*, and profanely speculating:

"I wonder what hellish exposures they are up to tonight! Damn them, anyhow, and their eternal exposures. I'll read no more of them!"

He kept his word. All night long he guarded the truck where Joan lay sleeping beside Nell, and when the foreman of the press-room came out, according to custom, and brought him a first copy of the paper, with the exclamation, "Can you beat that for an answer to the *Record?*—he hurled it back into his face and told him to "go to hell."

Bill's vociferous explosion awakened Nell, who ordered him to keep quiet. Joan half awoke and muttered, "Jerry."

"That's a good sign," thought Bill, "she's just sleep-

ing." Aloud to Nell he inquisitively, and Nell imagined, enviously, said:

"Who's this Jerry?"

Nell explained to him that it was the Jerry Englin who had been put in jail by the *Record,* and the greatest act of self-control that Bill had ever practiced in his life was his restraint at that moment of his hatred of Keating, that was piling up prodigiously in his heart against the time when it could be no longer restrained and would break furiously upon the head of the fiend whose function seemed to be to despise and destroy.

III

Joan awoke in the truck on Thursday morning oblivious of the past. Dumb apathy had taken the place of outraged feelings. Faculties that had functioned pathetically in excess of their capacity refused to function any longer. A glassy stare from vacant blue eyes betrayed the mental havoc that her shocks had wrought.

Frightened, Nell sent one of the newsboys after Bill, and meantime did her best to loosen the bonds that had bound up Joan's emotions.

"I can't make her cry—I can't make her smile. She is senseless, Bill—she—she just looks—and prattles," gasped awestricken Nell. "Poor kid—ain't it hell to be a girl." She broke down and blubbered.

Bill stared.

"Gawd Bill, she's out of her mind," moaned Nell.

"Don't I know it," mechanically answered Bill, still staring at Joan's piteously emotionless eyes. "Haven't I known it all along? But, at that, she's sane enough for me. If she can't lead her parade against the scoun-

drels, I can—damn them—it's important enough—"

"Getting her back to normal is more important," interrupted Nell.

"That can be done, too," answered Bill.

"How are you going to do it—I can't do it. I can't make her cry—I can't make her smile—she just stares—"

"I'm not going to try. He's going to do it."

"Who's he?"

"Jerry—Jerry Englin—"

"He's in jail."

"Maybe we can bail him out—got any money?"

"No."

"Makes no difference—the sight of him will do—listen:"

Bill drew somewhat inaccurately upon his memories of Tennyson for Nell's enlightenment:

> "She nor swooned, nor uttered cry;
> All her maidens watching said,
> 'She must weep or she will die.'
>
> "Rose a nurse of ninety years,
> Set *her* child upon her knee—
> Like summer tempest came her tears—
> 'Sweet, my child, I live for thee.' "

"The sight of *him* will do," repeated Bill.

Nell led Joan around to her lodging for a "bit of a wash-up and some breakfast" and then she and Bill gently took her to the jail.

IV

On the way Bill tried to explain to Joan that they were going "to see Jerry."

It did not seem to impress her until she saw the jail and the bars. Then Nell thought she detected a sign of returning intelligence in her childish prattle. She appeared to have identified the idea of jail in her mind with Jerry.

"Is Jerry in the jail?" she blandly asked the policeman behind the high desk.

Her head did not reach to the top of the desk, and the sergeant had to lean over to see her.

Bill and Nell towered protectingly on either side of her.

"Jerry who?" growled the officer peering down at her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I forgot there were other Jerrys—I mean my Jerry—Jerry Englin."

"He is," gruffly blurted the thick lips of the big round face pushed over to hers as she rose up on tiptoe to see and be seen.

"Oh—" She sank back from her toes and stood solidly on the floor, dejected, staring.

"But he is coming out, now," continued the sergeant.

"Is he—is he?" she exclaimed, rising up on her tiptoes again.

"Yes, a chap named Manly was in here and left the amount of his bail."

"Oh-oh-oh!" ejaculated Joan.

"That was Tom Manly, the editor of the *News*," Nell excitedly reminded Bill.

Bill recollected his efforts to thrash him.

"I'll remember it in his favour," he circumspectly replied.

Joan ran across to an iron-barred door opening into a corridor leading to the cells, and peered through it.

Nell leaned heavily on Bill's arm. Her white lips

moved as if in prayer, entreating Heaven for the miracle. Bill's eyes were beginning to overflow.

A wide shaft of light fell slanting from a window and lit up Joan's face. It had been totally colourless a moment earlier, but now it glowed with expectation, smooth and pure and still girlish in spite of her terrible suffering.

Half way down the corridor the turnkey opened a clanking door, and she saw Jerry step into the corridor, like a cowed animal let loose from one steel cage into another.

O agonizing instant—suspense unbearable!

Crisis of her sorrowful career!

"God be good," reverently muttered impious Bill.

Nell sobbed aloud.

"Jer-ry!" Joan's feeble lips stuttered, with all the gladness of her heart pulsating in her voice.

Nell collapsed upon Bill's twitching shoulder, weeping convulsively. Bill's handkerchief hid his brimming eyes.

"Jer-ry—Jer-ry—dear Jerry!"

He had stopped—startled—mystified.

Wistful, puzzling, deliberative Jerry—he must stop and consider who this little boy in the distance was.

Joan's tiny jacketed arms stretched through his cage, towards him, standing there.

Of all places in the world in which to see him again!

She swayed a little and clung for support to the bars.

"Jer-ry—dear Jerry—don't you know me—Jerry?"

The sight of his sad eyes unloosed her tears.

Yes—he recognized the voice—she could see that—but not herself. But how could he—she suddenly realized—in a newsboy's clothes?

"Jerry, it's Joan," she called to him.

"Joan—Joan—My God—Joan—"

The same piteous cry that once before he had uttered in the loft! The same piteous need of her!

His dear voice sounding once again in her ears.

He came hurrying towards her—to take her in his arms.

"Joan, my—Joan, my—my—"

No—he suddenly stopped.

Not his! Tom's!

Merciless disillusion!

Conscientious, considerate, scrupulous Jerry—with the same old indomitable spirit of resignation he broke off his pathetic greeting, remembering that he had left her to Tom.

He must control his emotions. She was Tom's.

"Joan—dear Joan," he substituted, "it was just like you and wonderful old Tom to provide my bail and get me out of here!"

And Joan clinging weakly to his arm, and weeping as he patted her hand, said to him:

"Jerry, I want to tell you about Tom." She must explain.

"Yes, Joan—I—I want to hear about Tom—about you and Tom." It took the whole of his courage to say it—to make it seem to her that he was really happy over her being with Tom. But it tried him too terribly to linger on it. He sought to lead the conversation away from Tom.

"So you are a newsboy, now, Joan," he playfully remarked—and there he was getting right back to her with Tom again because it was plain to him that her costume meant she was helping Tom in some of his newspaper

investigations, just as she used to help him faithfully in the loft. Once so devoted to him, now devoted to Tom!

Joan could not answer. She wanted him to take her in his arms, right there, before them all.

The evidence of her unknown suffering affected him terribly. So profoundly had she been broken by despair that her hold upon her returning faculties was precariously insecure. He surmised that her agitation was due to her recollection of their former intimacy—hurting her just as it was unbearably hurting him. He tried to distract her from it.

"Won't you introduce me to your friends, Joan," he stooped and softly asked her.

She controlled herself with a tremendous effort and meaningly replied:

"Next to you, Jerry, these are the two best friends I have, Bill and Nell."

"But you have good old Tom," he comfortingly remonstrated, failing utterly to see what she meant.

They moved to the door. The sorry little procession walked along aimlessly in the direction of Newspaper Row—Jerry and Joan together, Bill and Nell following behind. Homeless, friendless, worn out from suffering, all of them, shabbily attired, practically penniless, confronted by venomous court proceedings in the morning, the little band would never have been picked by any of the prosperous pedestrians among whom it made its way as being destined within the hour to clash and grapple stupendously with the mightiest of all earthly forces, in the most important revolution that the world had ever seen attempted.

They stopped at the "corner."

Jerry and Joan looked knowingly into each other's eyes.

Their corner.

Where they had seen each other last.

Where Jerry had awkwardly revealed his love.

The meeting place of life's currents.

Intimate with all their ups and downs.

Tarrying place for thousands.

It had been that to them.

Turning point for others.

Was it yet to be the turning point for them—the corner in their lives?

Snatches of familiar conversation greeted their ears.

"—Hello Ed: Goodbye—"

"—Come along with me—"

"—Get out of my way—"

"—Let's turn here—"

Joan bought the morning papers, as she had done so often before.

"I'll have one, too," familiarly said Bill. "It's my business, or used to be, but I haven't seen them yet."

"We'll leave you here, a while," said Nell, pulling reluctant Bill away.

"That's right," acquiesced Bill. "We'll leave you here a while—and you can tell him about your new clothes and the black eye," he added with great seriousness. "And when you want us we'll be back in the alley, at the paper-room. You can give us a ring, eh, Nell?"

Bill sauntered slowly off after Nell, who led the way. Joan gazed after them with tear-filled eyes, and said to Jerry:

"I owe them my life, Jerry." Then she added, still

trying to make him understand, "and my return to you."

A bright November sun shone full upon her, and added to the warmth of love that burned her little body through and through. Life had returned. It seemed to her that she had been rescued from hell and borne into God's bright world outside. She was still clinging to Jerry's arm.

"I want to tell you about Tom," she began again, as soon as Bill and Nell had gone.

"Yes, tell me about Tom, Joan," he answered, knowing it would be hard to hear, but wanting her to have the happiness of telling him.

"Up in the loft, Jerry; shall we go up to the loft—in the old way?"

"Yes, Joan," he replied, wondering how he would be able to stand going up there with her again. "Let's go up to the loft, in the old way."

Arm in arm, helping each other, they walked half-way down the block to the familiar doorway alongside of the *Record* building, and entered.

"What possible catastrophe is waiting for us up here where we have suffered so much?" they were both wondering, as they paused upon the threshold.

"Yelp-yelp-yelp-yelp," came a chorus of canine voices.

"That's the Paregorics welcoming us back," cried Joan happily. "Come on, Jerry," she exclaimed, as she went hurrying up the stairs tugging at his arm.

CHAPTER XVIII

I

JOAN sat down at her little breakfast table, and said: "Jerry, I want to tell you about Tom."

"Yes, Joan," he replied, very slowly, not anxious, and forcing himself to rejoice with her in her happiness over Tom.

He picked up Tom's paper, which she had purchased at the corner, to keep looking at it while she talked to him, not trusting himself to watch her while she spoke of her happiness with his successful rival.

Instantly, he ejaculated:

"Oh!"

Joan feared to look, feeling, as Bill had felt, that she could bear no more newspaper exposures. Was it about Jerry, she wondered, or might it be Tom's reply to Keating?"

She forced herself to look.

It was Tom's answer to Keating.

How monstrous! Unprecedented! Extraordinary!

And yet, her first hurried glance convinced her that it was the one natural and compulsory solution of his problem—their problem—the nation's problem!

Veritable thunderbolt, unexpected, mercilessly fatal!

Clinging to Jerry's arm, Joan stared in stupefied wonderment, and marvelled at the master-stroke delivered by their old schoolmate.

"Wonderful Tom!" commented Jerry.

Joan made no reply as she pored over the results of Tom's Tuesday and Wednesday conferences with his associates, as contained in the two articles which he had

presented to his staff the evening before for approval, and which he now presented to the public.

II

Occupying the whole of the top of the front page of the morning *News*, Joan saw printed in heavy, dignified type:

MY CONFESSION

BY

Thomas Manly

Editor

Underneath this challenging and humiliating headline, radically different from any headline ever before inserted in any paper by any editor, followed a series of terse, self-condemnatory paragraphs:

"I am a prostitute among you, my fellow citizens.

"I have gone about among you, searching everywhere and always for human weakness.

"When I have found it I have made money out of it for my keepers and for myself.

"When I have failed to find it I have produced it.

"Instead of being the greatest power for good among you, I am the most vicious influence in the lives of all of you.

"Instead of serving you I prey upon you and compel you to serve my keepers, the politicians and the profiteers.

"Instead of championing your rights, needs and aspirations, I force the will of my keepers upon you.

"I make you believe in war or peace, as their profits demand —in vice or virtue, in Heaven or Hell.

"Instead of publishing public opinion as I find it I manufacture it.

"Instead of mental and moral food I feed you poison brewed by deputies of the devil—demoralizing rubbish.

"Therefore nothing that enters your home is so contaminating and contemptible as my newspaper.

"Nobody is viler than the man who edits and is responsible for the material which it contains."

"In place of an exposure of Keating," Joan amazed, comprehended and said: "It is actually an exposure of himself."

"I miserably confess to having been the willing tool of my unscrupulous keepers.

"I have accepted a princely salary to keep my conscience out of the paper which I edit for them, not for you.

"Those under me have been compelled to follow my example in order to keep their jobs.

"We pretend to justify our practices in the name of 'Freedom of the Press' when we have actually substituted 'Licence' for 'Freedom.'

"Our real business is to lie, conceal, exaggerate, pervert, vilify and blackmail for profit, under the protection of the 'Freedom of the Press.'"

"Think of such an admission," ejaculated Jerry, "not accusation but admission—and coming from the lips of an editor himself! Think of the fine effect it will have when circulated around the country! Think of the good that it will do! Brave old Tom!"

They continued to read:

"It is our secure professional prerogative and obligation to dishonour and ruin.

"We arbitrarily sell you for a living.

"We are uncontrollable mental and moral bandits who keep you constantly afraid of us.

"We are fearless hired assassins who terrorize you into subjection to us.

"For money we recklessly kill the things we love most.

"When we cannot kill with the truth we use half-true headlines which are just as deadly.

"We have never been known to admit being wrong and we have never been known to praise.

"But we have come to feel the disgrace of prostituting our ability for a livelihood and we have penitently decided that if we cannot live by promoting conventional uplift, we will go out of existence rather than persist in our detestable position of propagating conventional demoralization."

"It is your influence upon Tom, Joan, that has changed him," said Jerry admiringly. "It is your victory as much as it is his."

Joan was thinking of her last words to Tom, when she had said to him: "Be brave enough to save yourself, and make me happy by letting me know when you get the courage to do it."

Tom had found the marvellous courage to do it.

Tom always did—something!

But although making her happy by his self-conquest, there was a tinge of sadness in the happiness which she could not explain.

She read on:

"God helping us, we will henceforth attack the fundamental evils of our social and economic system.

"Unswayed by any influence, we will print the news that is fit to print, exactly as we see it, to the best of our ability.

"We can never undo the wrong that we have been responsible for in the past, but we intend to try in the future to use our tremendous influence properly, in your interest.

"Humbly and sincerely signed for myself and my staff—

"Thomas Manly, Editor."

"There is no man greater than the man who humbly confesses and sincerely endeavours to make amends," commented Jerry, with fires of sincere admiration and extraordinary excitement in his eyes.

Joan read the second article aloud. It was brief:

"We, the undersigned members of the staff of the NEWS, *are in sympathetic revolt against the conventional demoralization propagated by unscrupulous newspapers, and we pledge ourselves to overthrow this most despotic tyranny that has ever oppressed the human race."*

Joan calculated that Tom's revolutionary policy meant running the risk of financial ruin and oblivion. Jerry broke in on her thoughts with an exactly contrary reflection:

"It is an overwhelming victory, Joan. It spells ruin for the *Record* and enormous prosperity for you and Tom. It is unbeatable—"

"Jerry, I want to tell you about Tom," Joan interrupted him.

"It isn't necessary, Joan. Tom has told it himself—told it magnificently."

His eyes sparkled like the flashes of his dynamos as he excitedly got up, walked back into his workshop, and began to busy himself with his beloved machines.

There was something in his manner so confidently and contentedly unlike him that Joan did not at first understand.

His demeanour mystified her.

Joan had never seen him look so happy. Never before in his life had he actually been so happy.

"Let's find out how the *Record* feels about it," he called to her. "Come here, Joan."

His happy eyes gave him away.

Joan read his secret in them before he revealed it.

She flew to him in an ecstacy of excitement.

"Jerry—Jerry—tell me Jerry—what makes you look so happy?—Jerry—"

He was masterful in his manner!

A skilful adjustment of his rheostat and his dynamos began to hum in their soothing way.

His beloved dynamos! He could not have Joan, but he could be absorbed in them. His mind slipped automatically into tune with their peaceful murmuring. His features took on their wistful look. Once again he was the same old Jerry.

Solemn, meditative, serious Jerry.

With the old deliberation he turned to her and said:

"Yes, I am happy, Joan, tremendously happy, Joan, because at last I can do something to make you happy,

instead of doing as I have always done—make you sad."

He paused and lifted up the telephone.

"Yes," he continued as he listened with the receiver at his ear, "I can now do something helpful for you—for you and Tom."

CHAPTER XIX

I

"IT'S such a stupendously big thing that Tom has done —for you—Joan, in fact for everybody, that my bit won't mean so much to you—no, of course not! What am I saying? Of course nothing of mine could possibly mean as much to you as what Tom has done. What I meant, Joan, was that the bigness of what Tom has done, and the bigness about it that must be so gratifying to you, and so different in its effects upon you from anything that I could do for you, is his sacrificing self-conquest."

He hurriedly busied himself with the adjustments of his mechanism as he talked.

"It's tremendous! Nobody but Tom and you can appreciate the bigness of it more than I do, Joan. Tom has mastered the greatest obstacles imaginable within and without. Tom has done the biggest thing that it is possible for a man to do. And, of course, it's due to you, Joan; it was done for you. Nothing really big was ever done by any man excepting to please or help or save a good woman. And when what the man does is a sacrifice, such as Tom's, it takes the best that is in a man—his most unselfish love—to do it; the kind of love, of course, that begets love—demands love in return. Happy girl, possessing a good man's love proved by sacrifice!"

Abstracted, argumentative Jerry, theorizing in the same old way.

His convincing and impartial manner of emphasizing Tom's worth might easily have intensified solicitude in

many a tormented woman's heart to the critical point where, confronted with the obligation of selection, she would weigh her love and her sympathy in the same scale, and choose the object of her pity, to her eternal misfortune, or else make no decision whatsoever, and simply suffer herself to be carried away by the one who, in the hour of her crisis, stormed her heart and captured it by the very vehemence of his assault. Thus destiny sometimes seems to take unfair advantage of a heart already overtaxed and burdened with suffering, by bringing instead of surcease of sorrow an additional tortuous problem to test, and frequently to destroy the sufferer. Thus rivals, regardless of merit, have lost or won in the race of love, by force of circumstance.

Joan, standing beside Jerry in front of his dynamos and coils, and lamps, and condensers, and batteries and telephones, listening as of old to the hum of the armatures, watching the sparks snapping over the induction coils, pressed him for the details of his invention in a tactful effort to lead his conversation away from Tom to himself. She had been familiar with his experiments and what he aimed to accomplish up to a certain point, but not beyond.

"Where have you been experimenting, Jerry?" she enquired.

"Down at the telephone company's plant, mostly," he replied.

"Why did you go down there?"

"I will show you, in a minute. But I was back here in the old loft again, night before last."

"You passed in front of the *Record* building going toward the loft, after midnight?"

"How did you know?"

"You passed behind me sitting on the kerb in front of the *Record* Building looking over at Tom's office in the *News* Building," she explained before she realized what she had said.

"Oh, waiting for Tom. Playing newsboy in connection with some of his plans."

"Jerry, I want to tell you about Tom—"

'If I had seen you and stopped I might not have been arrested," Jerry interrupted her.

Arrested!

Joan shuddered.

"When was it that you were arrested, Jerry?" she asked.

"Five minutes after I passed you," he replied. "Keating caught me on the fire-escape that runs from the loft floor to his editorial floor, in the rear of the building. I had slipped a dictograph into his editorial room earlier in the evening. I had reasons for wanting to know what goes on in there. I am listening to him now." He placed a telephone receiver to his ear.

"Keating had no case against me. He suspected I had been responsible for the occasional ringing of the telephone bells all over the city. He called up the authorities, charged me with making wireless experiments that interfered with telephone currents, invoked certain war restrictions under which to hold me, sent me down to headquarters, and had me locked up—"

"Had he any proof that your experiments actually interfered with the telephone currents?" Joan solicitously interrupted.

"He will have proof in a minute," Jerry answered,

with a suggestion of vindictiveness in his tone, "but he wasn't bothering about proof. My removal was his purpose, as it has always been," he continued, with restrained bitterness, as he went back in his mind over Keating's incessant and unsparing campaign to eliminate him as an enemy of the "Freedom of the Press."

"Then you did ring the city's telephone bells?" Joan enquired. "How did you do it? From the telephone company's plant?"

"We will do it right from this room," Jerry replied.

"But you have no wires running into all the city's homes?" she queried.

"No, and neither has the lightning flash, Joan, and yet that can and does occasionally ring every telephone bell in the city. And there are no wires between the wireless stations of two countries which can telegraph and even telephone to each other without them."

"True enough," replied Joan, "but wireless telephone equipments are fitted with delicate valves which detect and rectify and amplify currents communicated to them by such broadcasting stations as yours here." She picked up one of the tubular glass valves, to emphasize her argument, and pointed to the tuning apparatus, as she continued:

"The citizens' telephones are not equipped with these things, therefore they cannot receive wireless communications."

Jerry admiringly let her talk, wanting her to solve her problem herself.

"But, even though the citizens' telephones are not equipped with detectors and amplifiers, they are nevertheless reached by the electric waves which are sent forth

by our broadcasting station here and which reach everywhere—" he prompted.

"Reached, yes," Joan interrupted him, "but the ordinary 'phones are not in tune with the waves and can't get in tune with them, because they have no tuning apparatus, no valves, no detectors, no amplifiers." She held to her point.

"I admit that, Joan, but instead of the telephones geting into tune with the waves, did it occur to you that the waves might be put into tune with the telephones—might be shot through the air so completely in tune with the telephones, like the lightning flash, as to ring them, and make speech with them possible, without wires and without detectors or amplifiers?"

"That is impossible," insisted Joan.

"Nothing is impossible—at least not forever!" insisted Jerry.

"Doing the impossible is what many an amateur has accomplished when he has made his crude apparatus—little more improved than an ordinary 'phone—pick up waves a thousand miles away. Doing the impossible is the electrical experimenter's duty. It was impossible for me to do what I have done until you pointed out to me the proper test to make, and until I carefully studied the telephone company's equipment; but it is not impossible now, and, if you are ready we will do it, and give Keating his proof, and the shock of his life, and supply you and Tom with an aid in your campaign against the injurious monopoly of propaganda by the vicious Press."

"But, Jerry, if you can lift up that telephone and talk, unrestrainedly, to all the telephones in the city without their being equipped with standardized receiving appar-

atus, controlled by the Press, there no longer is any monopoly of news or propaganda by the Press!"

The significance of the invention, and its unlimited possibilities, amazed her.

"Exactly," quietly replied Jerry.

"Wonderful Jerry!" She applied to him the epithet he had so regularly applied to Tom.

"Not so wonderful as the man who first talked over a wire, or the man who first telegraphed without wires, or the man who first talked from continent to continent through the air," Jerry humbly replied. "My little invention is the simplest of logical steps onward from what has previously been done, and it would very quickly have been accomplished by somebody other than myself —even by some amateur—if you had not helpfully supplied me with the 'missing link' on the night of the first news of the Armistice."

"But its possibilities are prodigious," insisted Joan. "You underrated it when you led us to believe you were merely aiming to 'Multiply the Power of the Press.' You have not only multiplied but annihilated the power of the unscrupulous Press."

"Annihilate wireless broadcasters of enemy propaganda—it could have done that during the war," he dismally reflected, remembering the operations of the German wireless tower at Nauen. "Today I could have closed this little electric switch and unrestainedly outstripped such liars in a lightning-like dash ahead of them, to not merely a few telephones in tune but to all of them —to the brains of the world."

"You can still do it today. The broadcasters of vicious propaganda are still at it." She pointed to Keating's

room next door. "It will be just as valuable to the nation now, and to you, too, Jerry," she comforted him. "You will be rich, immensely rich."

"I could be richer," he said to himself, thinking of Joan with Tom. Aloud he excitedly said:

"Just listen to this, Joan."

He handed her the telephone connected with the dictograph in Keating's editorial room, and strode vindictively over to the wall that separated him from his persecutor. Once before he had stood at this same wall, gritting his teeth and muttering in his ungovernable resentment of Keating's oppression of him: "I'll take away from him his power to do to others what he has done to me."

His hour had come!

This time he said:

"I am going to crush you as I would the vilest snake that crawls."

He could have heard Keating's venomous voice at that very moment, screeching in fury, if he had placed his ear to the wall.

"Oh—oh—oh—listen to what he is plotting to do to Tom—" Joan exclaimed in consternation. "Jerry—we must warn—we must save Tom," she nervously added, and Jerry hurried to her side vowing that he would protect Tom for her.

He listened with the receiver for a moment, and then said:

"We will let the whole city hear what Keating is plotting! Ready! Quick! Press the switch down, Joan! To you belongs the honour of issuing the first edition of the freest, widest, most independent and unmonopo-

lized news-service that the world has so far received."

Joan pressed the switch.

Instantly a hundred thousand telephones rang in a hundred thousand homes, offices, workshops, schools, rectories, hospitals and public institutions, and a hundred thousand men, women and children listened in stupefaction to Jerry's voice announcing:

"Your telephone is now connected with the secret-chamber of your despotic tyrant, the editorial room of the editor of the *Record,* and you will hear what the monster and his minions are plotting against you and the editor of the *News* in retaliation for his courageous confession and promise published this morning. Listen!"

Jerry switched on the dictograph wire from Keating's office, and a hundred thousand startled ears heard Keating excitedly repeating:

"—we are ruined—there is no hope for the *Record* against the *News* now—we will set fire to our building at once—our insurance money is all the money that this plant can ever make now—we will see that the loft building next door is burned up too, together with its electrical apparatus that 'Electrical Englin' is using against the Press—there's a strong enough wind blowing—maybe we can burn up a part of the city too—the bigger the fire the worse for the editor of the *News*—we will implicate him—we will prove that he enviously applied the torch—we will have him proved crazy—his mad 'confession' proves it already—he must go down with us in our crash—"

The hundred thousand ears heard Keating repeating the details of his plot for a moment longer—then they heard one of his assistants interrupt him and tell him

what the telephones in the room were repeating—then they heard him curse Jerry Englin, and give the order to 'start the conflagration at once'—and immediately a hundred thousand frightened and maddened listeners dropped their telephone receivers and went tearing and crowding towards Newspaper Row.

II

Jerry and Joan ran to the window and with throbbing hearts watched the frenzied mob below, as it gathered for its assault upon the *Record* building next door.

The crowd overflowed into all the neighbouring streets.

Uproar filled the city.

Bill and Nell waiting at the telephone for word from Joan, had read Tom's paper and got Jerry's telephone revelation. The alley was jammed with men, women and boy members of Joan's "Army of the Victims of the Vicious Press," who had not been disbanded. Bill and Nell hurried them into line with their banners and rushed them into the street, where they were now standing in front of the *Record* building, with all their banners turned towards Keating's windows.

From their straining throats arose an immense and threatening imprecation.

Bill started upstairs to the loft. Nell demurred.

"I am going up to give her a note from the editor of the *News*," he explained to her.

Joan's eyes glistened as she peered across the fire-escape at the appalling climax of her crusade—the new aspect of Newspaper Row—the removal of Government from vicious newspaper control and its restoration to the people.

At that moment mid-day tolled slowly out from the clock of Trinity steeple. The appointed hour—the hour selected by Joan and Bill and Nell—the hour selected, abandoned, now surprisingly replaced. The last vibration of the twelfth stroke had hardly died away when heads beneath the fluttering banners swayed like waves beneath a squall and an immense shout went up:

"Joan, Joan!"

"That's my army," she fancifully informed Jerry. "Bill and Nell and I organized it to fight the tyranny of the vicious Press. That's why I am wearing newsboy's clothes." She excitedly told him all about Joan of Arc.

Jerry measured her few feet of slender stature, and murmured what Margaret had said:

"Joan, you're bigger than most men."

From the crowd there came tremendous howls in which were mingled all tongues—all dialects—all accents.

"This day makes history," commented Jerry. "The day of the triple attack upon the vicious Press—by Joan and Tom and their friend Jerry."

The scene in the street had become terrifying. The tumult was increasing. There was no resisting that raging tide of frightful faces. Wrath made their fierce countenances blood-red, their brows were dripping with sweat, their eyes darted lightnings. The fateful hour of the Revolution against the unscrupulous Press had come!

The people's hour! They had silently hated their vicious Press and had not known what to do about it. Now they knew, and they were doing it!

Their pleas had been ignored. Their influence had been destroyed. The stubborn pride and insane avarice

of their tyrant had driven them straight to the precipice of revolution. The *Record's* cruelty, greed, lust of power and falsehood were to be dealt with by other than impossible legal means. The pent-up hatred of the city was let loose!

Clubs of policemen hopelessly beating back the mob gave way to the bayonets of boys deprived of using them elsewhere by the sudden ending of the war. Instead of the great munition factories and depots which they had hoped to attack abroad, these disappointed fighters stood sullenly confronting Keating's gigantic munition factory, where Pogo and other privileged interests manufactured mental bombs and gas shells for their annihilation. Threateningly they clamoured for their tyrant, more hated than the foreign enemy.

Suddenly dense clouds of smoke rolled from the upper floors of the *Record* office.

The staff took to the fire-escapes and started downwards on the front of the building.

A hundred rifles shot up to a hundred shoulders to pick them off one by one.

Joan shrieked!

These boys who had gathered around her in Keating's office, and told her with their eyes that they hated the work they had to do—they must not die!

She leapt out upon the fire-escape that ran down the front of the loft building, in the midst of the smoke, and screamed above the roar below.

The sight of her, still clad in her knickers like one of them, evoked an ovation from her army of supporters in the street, and momentarily distracted the riflemen from their prey.

Instantly she was in command!

Jerry had run back to the loft door to let in some one knocking at it—Bill!

Meantime Keating came crawling along the *Record* cornice through the smoke and flames toward Joan.

Rifles were jerked up to shoulders once again.

Joan flung up a protecting hand.

The rifles were lowered.

In her eyes shone compassion, and the will to help.

In his eyes—terror, hatred, and the lust for vengeance.

"Jerry!" she shrieked, and reached over to extend to Keating a helping hand.

But Jerry had gone to let in Bill.

Keating strained forward to take her hand.

The cornice crumpled beneath his weight!

He hung by his hands!

Doomed!

Joan clutched the iron railing of the fire-escape with her right hand, and leaning far over into the blinding smoke, stretched out her left hand to the poor wretch swinging within a few feet of it.

From that point, gibbeted, he seemed to be showing to the entire city.

"Jerry!" she screamed again.

Keating swung his body backward to get momentum for a lurching leap at Joan's extended hand.

A doomed man's desperate attempt.

A demon's diabolical design.

She might sustain his weight if he caught her hand!

Mad hope!

If she could not he would carry her with him down to destruction!

Mad revenge!

He leapt.

Joan's little body strained towards him.

Jerry and Bill reached the fire-escape at the instant of the leap!

Four tense hands strongly, agonizingly grasped her arm—struggled to draw her back—

But Keating's frantic clutch was on her wrist with the grip of death!

He hung dangling in full view of the horror-stricken mob!

His dead-weight, and part of Joan's, against the strength of Jerry and Bill!

And the flames driving closer!

All of them on the brink!

The mob breathless!

Fire-bells clanged and firemen struggled to lift a ladder.

It would be too late.

Keating was tugging Joan down!

A great gasp broke from the crowd.

He had let go!—Shrieking, they saw him fall down through the smoke—to his doom.

III

Nell hurriedly joined Bill in the loft after the *Record* fire had burned itself out and the mob had dispersed.

Joan's eyes detected Nell's motive instantly. She remembered how reluctant Bill had been when Nell had pulled him along with her as the four leaders of the little band had entered Newspaper Row and stopped at the "corner" a short while before—beaten then—all four of them—triumphant now!

Joan glanced out of the corner of her eyes at poor old Bill looking at her yearningly, and confirmed her suspicions of the motive of Nell's visit. Then she looked from him to Nell. Bill followed her eyes, and looked at Nell, too.

Nell was quietly weeping.

Bill understood.

His big heart overflowed in a comforting reassurance to his pal that he had "merely come up to deliver to Miss Joan a note which Mr. Manly had entrusted to him to give to her," which relieved Nell completely.

Joan turned crimson at mention of the note from Tom, and looked towards Jerry standing at the window watching the smouldering ruins.

"I guess we'll go, now Nell," mumbled Bill.

Joan held his hand and Nell's, trying to speak to them as they departed, but had to let them go with only the assurance in her eyes of what the lump in her throat would not let her say.

"I suppose there won't be any trial," Jerry remarked, as he continued looking out of the window. He was thinking of what Keating might have tried to do to him in court on the morrow.

"Trial!" thought Joan, as she looked at Tom's unopened note.

CHAPTER XX

I

"GOOD newspapers are the nation's greatest assets," continued Jerry, looking from the ruins of the misguided *Record* to the *News*."

Joan did not reply. Tom's opened note absorbed her.

"Good newspapers have unfortunately had to sustain and defend the bad ones," Jerry went on. "Vicious propaganda and sensational journalism have masqueraded under the protecting name of 'the Press,' usurped the prerogatives of 'the Press,' demanded the co-operation of 'the Press,' abused our country's fundamental principle of the 'Freedom of the Press,' demoralized our people for money in the name of 'the Press,' and the tragedy is that they have been tolerated, shielded, and championed by 'the Press' as one of the family."

Joan's emotions would not have allowed her to answer Jerry now, even had she heard him. Tom's pathetic note pleaded with her effectually for the moment to the exclusion of all else.

"Bad newspapers haven't had the benefit of criticism," Jerry went on with his meditation. "They have deprived themselves of it, Joan."

Joan was deaf to Jerry's argumentation.

"They would not tolerate it. They admitted the value of criticism by practicing it, but blindly and arrogantly resented its application to themselves. As a consequence, while various other human instrumentalities have been kept constantly improving through the aid of criticism, bad newspapers have deliberately kept themselves deteriorating by rejecting criticism, until finally, as a result

of having proudly put themselves above it, they have sunk so far below the point where they could be helped by it that their absolute abolition is now demanded by a public formerly disposed to criticize merely but now determined to condemn."

Jerry's typically sober words competed altogether ineffectually in Joan's ears with Tom's touching tribute to her influence over him, revealed in his pleading note.

"I am giving this to Bill to give to you, Joan," Tom's note began. "I have no idea where you are. I would humbly crawl to you at once, on my knees, if I did. I think Bill probably does know where you are. He has fought me away from the truck where I suspected you lay ill. This morning the truck is gone. I went to the loft and could not find you. I thought you might be with Jerry at the jail, so I went there."

Joan noted that Tom modestly avoided saying that he had secretly supplied Jerry's bail.

"I have just returned," the note went on, "and ventured to ask Bill if he would take a note to you for me. He seems less harshly disposed towards me this morning. This is the second note that I have had to entrust for delivery to you within the last thirty-six hours. The other note was sent to you after I had looked everywhere for you, all day Tuesday and most of Tuesday night. I went unsuccessfully looking for you, and finally sent my note to you by the newsboy in an effort to reach you, to tell you, what you asked me to make you happy by telling you when I got the courage to do it. When I reached home, Monday night, after you had sold me a newspaper, your dear photograph spoke to me from my table, where it has always stood since we went to school together, and told

me that it was you who sold me the paper, and shamed me into resolving to do what you have so often pleaded with me to do. It gave me the courage to do it."

Remorseful realization of the successive stages of her relationship towards Tom!—Friendship—solicitude—sympathy—admiration! Tom, she feared, to these may have hopefully added encouragement—even though she meant merely to help him to help himself.

"In between my efforts to find you, on Tuesday," the note continued, "I discussed and arranged with my associates to do what I have humbly and earnestly tried to start to do in my paper this morning. I ask you to believe, Joan, that I did not exactly do it to—well, bluntly, to get you, but I did do it on account of you, and could never have done it except for you although I admit having failed miserably to do it, and that I did all sorts of shameful things in its place to get you, being eventually shamed into it by the suffering which you had assumed for your crusade—which suffering I could not endure—and which crusade you have compelled me by your example to assume thus tardily as my own."

Joan read Tom's mind between his lines. Side by side with his words she read Jerry's words:—"proof of love and right to be loved is based on sacrifice alone."

The note continued: "Just as your example has forced me to confess to the public the wrongs I have perpetrated against them in the name of what you call 'convention,' so does it force me to confess to you abjectly in writing, as I will confess to you in person, if you will let me see you, the wrongs that I have similarly done you in my uncontrollable determination to have you.

"Everything of which Keating scorchingly accused me

in your presence is true—everything up to his accusation that I lured you to my home by my note.

"That is false.

"I sent you my note to tell you, as you asked me to tell you, that I had started in to try to do what you so often had pleaded with me to do. I sent it to you in the very midst of trying to carry out your wishes. I did not expect it to bring you to my home, but I did hope that it might help to make you begin to believe in me."

"Merciless reprisal!" painfully realized Joan. "Bitter retribution! Counter-stroke of compensation! Fateful —perhaps Providential—intervention!"

Memories of her fight against her inclination to yield to Tom attacked her. Visions of her forced flight into his home for protection harassed her.

"I might have been Tom's now," she admitted to herself, "but for Keating's malign interception of his note!"

The revelation drained her heart of all its sympathy and showered it woman-like, upon her hapless, misguided but persevering wooer.

"Keating's disclosure to you," wrote Tom, "was literally my own confession intended to be made to you, actually taken out of my mouth before I could utter it and used by him to accuse and condemn me. It was useless to try to tell you this while he was in the act of condemning me before you.

"I know, of course, just how you feel, and I understand that with Jerry's return I am a poor second in the race, but if ever a man desperately and humbly begged to be forgiven and pleaded for a chance, I humbly beg you Joan for God's sake give me my chance to prove to you that I have finally learned the full truth of what you told

me—that 'the proof of love is based on sacrifice alone'."

The metamorphosis of Tom!

Tom with all his magnetic aggressiveness as of old, but with an added flavour of Jerry. Irresistible blend—and she had not thought it possible. Tom transformed! Miracle of assimilation! Mystery of woman's influence over man! Harvest of love nurtured by the tears of self sacrifice!

"Jerry was right," she realized. "How truly the Tom who generously released Jerry from jail instead of taking advantage of his absence, had it in him to be big, and how really big had been his public confession of self-conquest, made for me—a love of sacrifice—meriting love in return—deserving richest sympathy for its tragic frustration!"

"This is a great day's work for you, Joan," Jerry turned from the window and broke in upon her absorbing reverie.

Tom's note fell to her lap, and she looked up at him.

Jerry analytically, as usual, continued:

"You have scored a victory over your arch enemy, 'convention,' removed Keating, triumphed over the vicious Press, helped the hirelings of the Press to be true to their better selves, led Tom to his magnificent triumph, and enabled me to make my own little contribution towards your successful campaign."

"I have done absolutely nothing myself," Joan protested. "My independent efforts were foredoomed to disaster—I can see that plainly now. I have proved it to be madness for a woman to try to function as a man. I have done nothing, nothing, but look on and weep!"

"Yes, that's all that a good woman ever imagines she is doing, because she never comprehends the extent of

her silent power—the greatest influence in the universe next to the omnipotence of God—by which she actually inspires, and stimulates and directs the accomplishments of men—in the very way that you have been responsible for Tom's efforts and mine," replied didactic Jerry. "It was never intended that you or any other woman should function independently and aggressively through yourself alone, and I will not question your contention of possible delusion and failure in that respect, but you cannot deny, Joan, that you have all along been guiding Tom's talents into the path which he has so admirably chosen. And as for your influence over me, I am certain that you must know you have always been the motive-power behind my poor efforts. Like wireless waves to my mind there have flown to me incessantly from your mind impulses directing not only my actions but even my thoughts. Ever since I read in Tom's paper that every human being is both a sending and a receiving radio-telephonic instrument I have liked to compare the process by which you controlled me to wireless transmission. You remember what the article said about 'minds in tune,' 'mental telepathy,' 'intuition,' 'instinct—'"

Joan interrupted him under the influence of a suspicion of an ingenious explanation of her misdirected efforts.

"But you didn't keep on holding my mind in tune with your own, Jerry. That's why I went wrong! I didn't have your thoughts to guide me when I needed them. You suddenly ceased to—"

"Of course I couldn't let myself think of you in the same way after Tom—"

He broke off—realizing that he was encroaching upon another's domain. Similarly he had broken off in his

tremendous effort of relinquishing her to Tom—like breaking the circuit of magnetic influence by which a ship is helmed.

But in his mind he went on, discursively as ever, as if seriously adding to the curious diary of his dogmas about women:—"Woman's sensitive soul harkens to two voices —the inner, spiritual voice of conscience, instinct—typified in Joan's dream by the spirit of Joan of Arc—and the mortal voice of her beloved. Both voices call her, incessantly. Wayward the woman to whom either voice is missing—either one. Tormented the woman to whom the two voices clash. Happy alone the woman to whom both voices harmonize. Joan's happiness shall not deteriorate into torment because of me!"

His jaw tightened rigidly under the realization that he endangered her happiness, and sealed his lips against any further reference to his former relations with her.

And in her mind, too, Joan's thoughts rushed rapidly on to her similarly heroic decision: "Two such wonderful men!" she soliloquized. "And to be credited by men of the calibre of Jerry and Tom with the merit of their accomplishments! To be wanted by two such men! Both of them have done such marvellous things! Both of them have made such terrific sacrifices! Both of them have been so devoted, for so long a time, to one so far beneath them!"

Her sense of her unworthiness became acute.

She decided to be bluntly frank.

"Jerry, no matter what you kindly believe I may have formerly amounted to in the way of influence, it is impossible for me to accept credit for any part whatsoever in what either you or Tom have just done, because I

haven't seen you for two long weeks, and I haven't seen Tom, except once or twice, for a moment, during the same interval of time."

Jerry's eyes revealed a great awakening in his mind.

He moved across to where Joan sat with Tom's letter in her lap.

"Ting-a-ling, Ting-a-ling," rang the telephone.

Joan picked up the receiver and answered the call.

Jerry pondered over Joan's disclosure.

"Hello," answered Joan.

"Joan," replied Tom's voice.

Jerry, watching her, saw her turn crimson.

"Yes, Tom."

"Bill has just told me he delivered my note, and that you were up in the loft. May I come up, Joan, please?"

Tom's sorrowful voice pleaded earnestly for his chance.

Joan hesitated, and glanced at Jerry.

"Certainly, Tom," she finally replied, and added, "Jerry is here and we'll have 'T—4—3'—"

Overpowering memories of the treasured menu-card from the tea-shop, on which Jerry had pencilled the little circle and the two dots—"contestants at the post." Overwhelming reminders to both of them about the start of the race.

"Tom is coming up," she said to Jerry.

Ending of the race!

Jerry despairingly looked at her with the eyes that had hopelessly worshipped her on their "corner."

Turning point?

Joan dropped her gaze from him to Tom's letter in her lap.

Heart-breaking final dash for the post!

She had not mentioned the note to Jerry. It seemed to need an explanation. She said simply:

"I think I ought to tell you that Tom sent me this letter—"

She broke off, and stopped.

Jerry understood.

Tom's proposal!

The Finish!

Too late!

He got up nervously, and walked away toward the window, trying in the old way "to get away from things," struggling with his thoughts.

The conviction that destiny is an irresistible force dominated him. He had no logical resistance to oppose to it. He could not sway it one way or the other, but he could be fair to Tom—he must be fair to Tom. He was born to lose—it was in his stars—he knew that—he had always known that—he could not change that—but he could be fair—fair to Tom.

Looking out of the window he saw Tom leaving the *News* building on his way to the loft.

In a few minutes he would be here—to take what he had won!

He pulled himself together with a tremendous effort, and called to Joan. "Here comes Tom."

She rose and stood beside him at the window, watching the editor of the *News* crossing the street.

Hundreds of grateful and admiring eyes saluted him as he passed.

"Tom's triumphal march—wonderful Tom!" breathed Jerry.

He forced himself to smile and look at Joan as he said it.

She stood with bowed head, now raising her misty eyes to his, now hiding them beneath her lids.

Uncontrollably agitated, Jerry abruptly placed his hand beneath her chin and gently tilted back her head.

"You love him, Joan?" he half-sobbed in desperation.

Joan heavily closed her eyes, and two great tears rolled down her cheeks.

Jerry impetuously clasped her little body in his arms and passionately kissed her on her aching eyes—and on her lips.

Audacious Jerry! The first aggressive act of his life!

Gentle Jerry with a sudden dash of Tom's masterful aggressiveness.

Deliberate, retiring Jerry—decisively and surprisingly quick upon occasion.

Her marvellous ideal at last!

And she had thought it impossible!

Prodigy of woman's power to mould and make the man!

The door opened.

Tom saw them in each other's arms.

Jerry walked over to his old friend, steadied him with both hands on his shoulders, and said:

"Too late, Tom! I've taken her."

He had never seemed so brave!

"You—should—have—done—it—long—ago, Jerry," stammered Tom.

"Wonderful Tom!" marvelled Jerry.

They went over and sat with Joan between them, an arm apiece around her, and tried to stem her tears.

II

"Ting-a-ling, Ting-a-ling" sounded the telephone again.

Tom reached for the telephone receiver and listened.

"It's the City Asylum," he said. "One of the 'trusties' out there who heard Jerry's wireless telephone message says he wants to speak to Joan."

"Hello?" sobbed Joan into the transmitter.

"Is this Miss Joan?" came a familiar voice.

"Yes, this is Joan."

"This is Larry."

Joan gasped.

"It's poor Larry!" she whispered to Jerry and Tom.

"Yes, Larry—" she spoke into the phone.

"Sometimes fools are prophets, Miss Joan, and so I thought it would be timely to suggest that we would do well now to sell out our monopoly of the air to our windy politicians before they try to make us believe they always owned it by Divine Right—"

Joan silently and sadly hung up the receiver and handed the telephone back to Tom.

Heartbroken Tom kept looking longingly into Joan's tenderly pitying eyes as he mechanically took the instrument from her, and, in placing it back upon Jerry's work-table inadvertently touched one of the little electric switches connecting the aerials with the big amplifier, which inauspiciously spoke with the sorrowful voice of the sad singer from afar and disappointingly reminded him, that

"Memory is the only friend
That Grief can call its own."

III

A little later there was "T—4—2," with the knife beside the spoon.

The little mother of the tea-shop, mother-like—through many sorrows—come into her own.

. . . . . .

Patiently, persistently, even if need be militantly and sorrowfully, may all of our good women come quickly into their natural right of mothering the world for the restraint of what erratically ails it.

THE END

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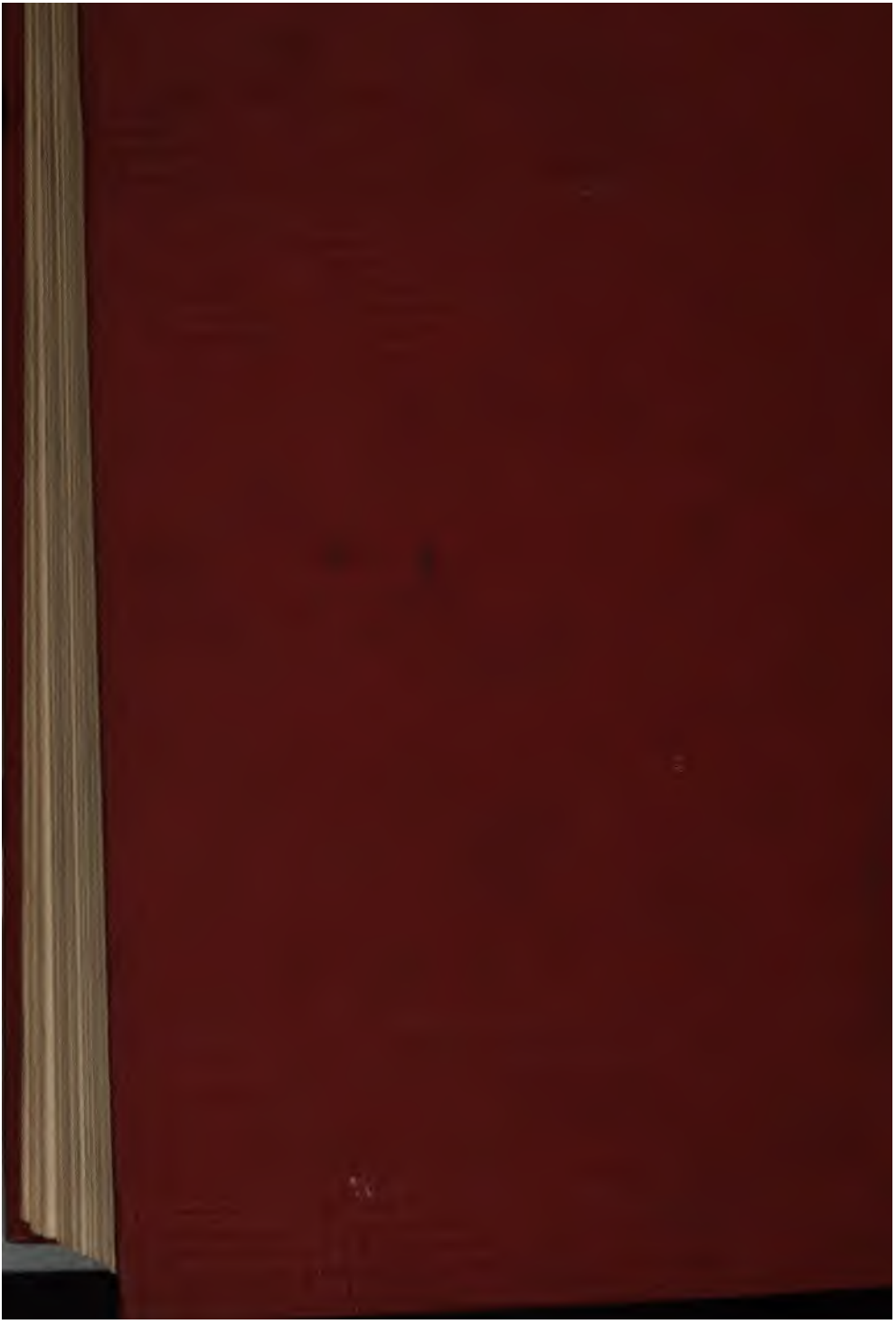
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